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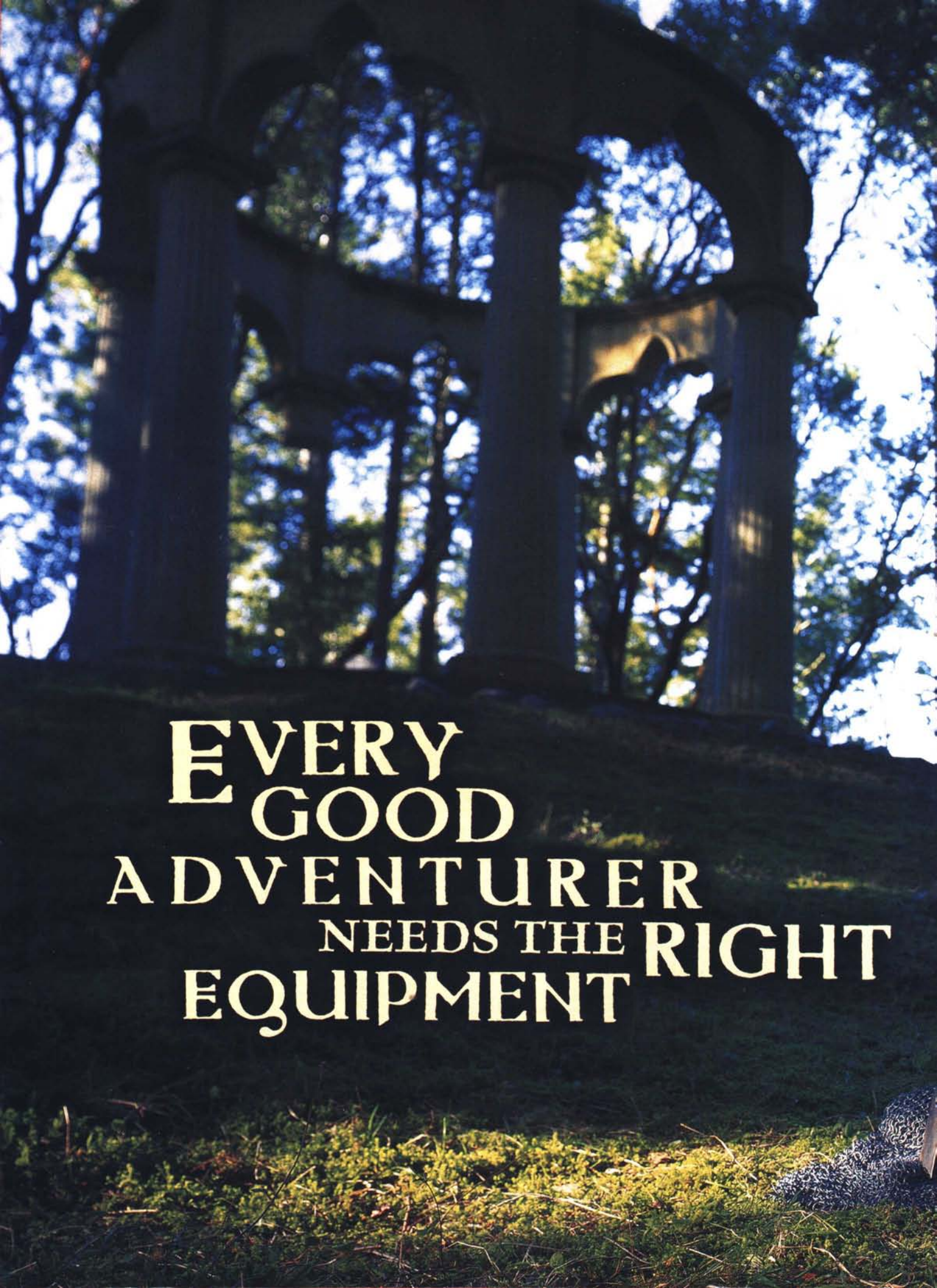
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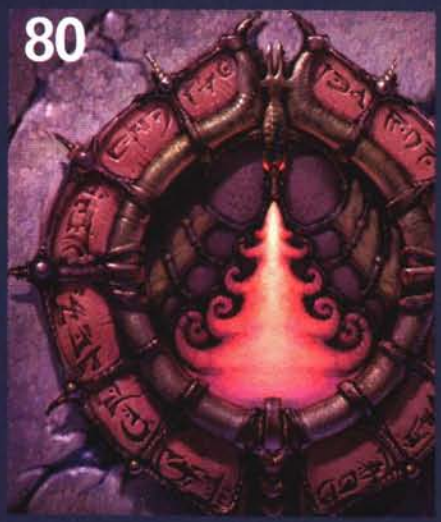
ON THE COVER

Epic-level Krusk might not get any prettier, but Greg Staples shows how tough he gets. The full-page reproduction of the cover appears on page 24.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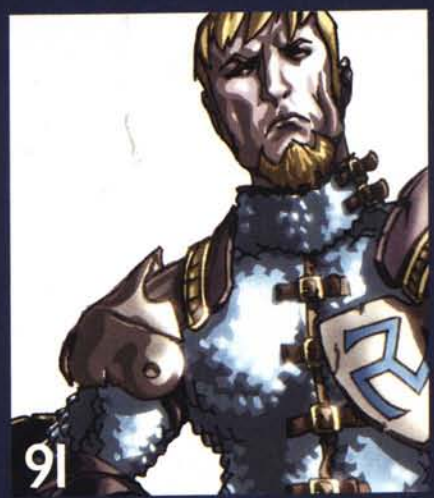

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WYRM'S TURN

I Choose Kung-Fu

Some people want to clash with gods, some want to rule vast empires, and some want to confront the wondrous across the planes. The latest edition of D&D was built with the idea that letting players make choices was good; give them options, the philosophy goes, and balance those options against one another carefully. Great; then I choose kung-fu.

The *Epic Level Handbook* is the latest product to tackle this philosophy: Whether or not high-level play is your bag, the players, not the game designers, should get to choose at what level the campaign ends, what level your character retires, or how many *+8 brilliant energy spiked chains of lawful power* are enough. You should also, by the product of careful game design, get to choose what the game feels like throughout all the levels of play.

So, when my character gets to 21st level, I want to feel like I'm in a kung-fu movie. When the party chases Malicath the arch-lich through the Palace of Silence, and fifteen iron golems charge in from an antechamber, the party in this epic game doesn't hesitate. With little preamble, the ranger Beran, master of the green path, wielder of the twin deaths, leaps across the room, landing in his famous three winds stance, and says, "I'll take care of this. Just find the lich." Beran's player feels great, the rest of the party has their own prowess validated by Beran's choice, and the golems are about to be wrecked. The way I want to play epic-level campaigns doesn't make light of or ignore the fact that the characters can smash armies, doesn't constrain the campaign to the grandiose, and balances scenes that let each character demonstrate tremendous individual prowess with scenes where the characters have to make choices based on character, not on power. Of course, sometimes you'll get to the part of the plot where one powerful villain seems like too much for even the assembled heroes to handle; then, with a little bit of luck, they'll find a way to win. Like a kung-fu movie.

So, I want kung-fu. What kinds of epic games do you want?

Editor-in-Chief

SCALE MAIL

Strongly Built

I thought the May 2002 issue (#295) was very solid. Castles and strongholds are something that I've been very interested in incorporating into my game, and this issue gave me a springboard from which to start. I will definitely take a look at the *Stronghold Builder's Guidebook* now when it comes out in May.

The tiles in the issue are also really nice (so are the cavern tiles from #293). My favorite article in this issue is "Every Home a Castle," by Darrin Drader. Unfortunately, I couldn't find a "Building Drekken's Rest" sidebar to match those of the other 3 residences. Would you happen to know the "Subtotal" and "Total" for that residence? I think that I could figure out the rest once I see the *Stronghold Builder's Guidebook,* but I would like to verify the above information. Thanks, and keep up the good work.

Brie Zobel
Address withheld

Subtotal: 665,150 gp
Total: 866,400 gp

Too Much of a Good Thing

I'm about halfway through *DRAGON* #295, and I'm running out of steam. Strongholds, castles, strongholds, moats, strongholds, mortar, strongholds, trap-building, blah, blah, blah . . .

Although I almost always enjoy reading your magazine, and while I understand the appeal of producing issues with themes, it's possible to overdo it.

The influence of the imminent release of the *Stronghold Builder's Guidebook* is apparent. It only takes two or three articles to introduce a theme to an issue, and there's no need to tie an issue so fundamentally (and obviously) to an upcoming product release. Those of us interested in rules for designing strongholds are going to buy the product; those of us who aren't interested aren't going to magically become so by reading page after page of such product-specific supplemental or leftover material in *DRAGON.*

One of the appeals of your magazine is that in any given issue, I can almost always find at least 10 or 15 pages that I'll be able to put to good use in my gaming. This is because the material is usually varied. When you produce an issue that's so strongly themed, you lower the chances of someone finding any use in that issue of your publication. Of course, you also heighten the chance of someone finding use in the *entire* publication, but the trade-off isn't a smart one, for what I hope are obvious reasons.

Enough with the complaining. In general, I greatly enjoy your magazine, and I think the editorial staff does a fantastic job. Please accept these comments in the constructive manner in which they're offered.

Jeff Wilder, Esq.
San Francisco, CA

We're always experimenting with the content mix, and presenting more or less strongly themed issues is one of the toughest choices we face. DRAGON *walks a fine line between monthly source book and a more general publication that handles all aspects of D&D. The strongholds issue in particular seemed like a great opportunity to put much of a product's support in one place, making it easier for readers to learn what castles and other strongholds might bring to their game. You'll see a mix of heavily and lightly themed issues in the next few months, so make sure to chime in on those issues as well.*

Double-Sided Coin

I have worked in a military prison for the last 3 years. Reading the editorial in *DRAGON* #295 has given me a mixture of feelings toward the subject of prisoners playing RPGs. In the facility where I work, the prisoners are not allowed to play any RPGs. They are, however, allowed to have RPG books and subscriptions to *DUNGEON* and *DRAGON Magazine* as long as they have the proper authorization. This basically means that someone in the upper echelon has perused the material and found it not to be a detriment to good order and discipline.

It has been explained to me and other staff members that prisoners playing RPGs can disrupt the good order and discipline necessary in a prison environment. The facility's view on the matter is that no one prisoner or group of prisoners should have any type of leadership position over another prisoner. This applies to everything from work, to morning PT, to recreation. The "bigwigs" deem the

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IN THEATRES JULY 12

position of DM as a "leadership position," since it is he (we have no female prisoners) who is leading the group of players through the adventure, and it is ultimately the DM who awards individual players with experience, treasure, and so on. On this level, I can understand the position the facility takes concerning the matter.

What I see is as an injustice, however, is that the prisoners are allowed to have the material, yet they are not permitted to use it in the fashion it is intended. Their *Player's Handbooks* and *Dungeon Master's Guides* are just reading material. I liken this to giving the prison population video game consoles, but only letting them read the owner's manuals.

So where do I stand on the subject? I'm not exactly sure. Prison is not intended to be fun. Playing RPGs is something that the law at this time cannot prevent me from doing. Yet when you break the law and are incarcerated, each prison has individuals in charge who might or might not like the idea of this activity taking place. That is one of the harsh realities that a convicted criminal must face. Some prisoners don't get to watch their favorite TV programs while locked up, and some don't get to play their favorite games. It all depends on the facility supervisors and what they see as a potential threat to good order and discipline.

My suggestion? Stay on the right side of the law.

Joe Waddell
Address withheld

Spouting Off

I received *Dragon* #295 in the mail this afternoon. First, I would like to say that because of the historical article "Fit for a King" by Dean Poisso, I have decided to move the *Stronghold Builder's Guidebook* from my "perhaps" list to my "definite purchase" list. I found the lessons Mr. Poisso gave on the evolution of both European and Oriental strongholds to be well written, informative, and useful.

Unfortunately, this is not what prompted me to write this letter. I was rather incensed by the editorial "Trapped in Real Dungeons" by *Dragon Magazine* Group Publisher Johnny Wilson. While I must admit that Dr. Wilson makes many valid and insightful arguments, I find that he fails to address the most important point: He is asking for our support on behalf of thieves, rapists, murderers, and pedophiles. He argues that he is trying to protect the rights and civil liberties of all gamers. I don't question any of the legalities or laws that Dr. Wilson references, as I am quite sure that Dr. Wilson knows far more about the law and legal system than I. What I do question is both the morality of his efforts and the appropriateness of using *Dragon Magazine* as a personal forum to try to advance his own political agendas. If Dr. Wilson wants to try to help prison inmates, that's great. Just don't try to solicit aid or sympathy for them from me, as my sympathy is reserved for the victims and their families, not the criminals. As I mentioned earlier, I also question the appropriateness of using *Dragon Magazine* as a political forum. If I want to become more politically active than I am, I will go to a town meeting or become an election campaign volunteer. If I want to escape reality for a while, I will pick up my copy of *Dragon* and retreat into the sanctity of my imagination. The point is, I roleplay in order to escape from the concerns and pressures of everyday life, and I am mightily disturbed by Dr. Wilson's political views imposing on that time.

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ZOGONIA
DINDIL, ARE YOU OKAY? DOMATO USED HIS ORB OF LIFE TO RAISE YOU.
WHAT KILLED YOU, DINDIL?
SOMETHING... KILLED.....
YES. WE FOUND YOU ON THE FLOOR—DEAD—BUT WITH NO VISIBLE WOUNDS. I BELIEVE A BEHOLDER KILLED YOU WITH ITS DEATH RAY.
BEHOLDER?
MORE LIKELY A SHADOW KILLED HIM BY FATALLY DRAINING HIS STRENGTH.
IMPOSSIBLE. WE HEARD HIM SCREAM "LARGE MONSTER."
TO DINDIL, A SHADOW IS LARGE.
WELL, DINDIL? WHAT WAS IT... A BEHOLDER OR A SHADOW?
MAYBE... I WAS ONLY TAKING A NAP...?
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BY TONY MOSELEY www.zogonia.com

I am sure that many of your readers will undoubtedly decide that I am an uncaring, opinionated, conservative jerk (and they would be correct), but I think that prisoners are coddled enough without more people lobbying for the criminals' rights. As far as I am concerned, they voluntarily gave up their rights and liberties when they took those same rights and liberties away from their victims.

Great! Now you've got me spouting socio-political views as well. I would humbly suggest that you leave the politics to arenas other than the hallowed pages of the magazine I love so well.

Kevin A. Williams
Tolland, CT

Taking a Stand

I would like to applaud *Dragon Magazine* for taking a courageous stand on a controversial topic. The editorial in issue #295 by Johnny Wilson on the prisoners who have been unable to receive their subscriptions was a bold step to take, but, I think, a warranted one.

Many other gamers I have talked to recently have said that they don't agree with the editorial or its place in the magazine because of their personal feelings about prisoners' rights.

My feeling is that this has nothing to do with prisoners' rights at all. Ignore what you think about convicts! What the editorial says, and proves by legal precedent, is that the wardens of those prisons are performing illegal actions by denying the prisoners their magazine subscriptions. That is what this issue is about—someone is doing something illegal and it needs to be corrected. Since that something involves gaming materials, and more importantly, the wardens' views of those games, it is entirely appropriate for *Dragon Magazine* to devote an editorial to it.

As the editorial illustrates, if we stand by and let the hobby we love be discriminated against in this case, then we are allowing a precedent to be set. If this is not corrected, it might only be a matter of time before other segments of society follow suit.

I applaud Wizards of the Coast for taking a stand on this. They could have distanced themselves from the issue and just told the prisoners, "So we guess you can't get our magazines." Instead, they made an effort to defend the rights of their consumers. That is good customer service, and I think everyone should acknowledge it—again, no matter what your opinion of convicts.

Mark Worthy
Mantua, NJ

A World Less Traveled

While I suppose that Vince Lethal's letter ("Regurgitated Races," *Dragon* #294) had a point about races from previous editions being billed as "new," I take issue with his complaints about conversions for 3rd Edition, especially his derisive and sarcastic tone.

I am twenty-seven years old, but I have only been playing D&D for nine years. I had never played or read any version of *Curse of the Azure Bonds* before I read "Lords of The Lost Vale" and mentioned the article to my DM. After enlightening me a bit about the saurials' history, he loaned me his copy of the novel. Not only did I enjoy *Curse of the Azure Bonds,* but since reading it, I've been eyeing a copy of its sequel, *The Wyvern's Spur,* that's been gathering dust on my local game shop's shelves.

Mr. Lethal should consider this before cracking wise: Not everyone has been playing D&D as long as he has or knows as much about D&D "history" as he does. What about people who began playing D&D with 3rd Edition's release? Should they not have the opportunity to use saurials in a 3rd Edition setting? Should they have to go searching through 2nd- and 1st-Edition material to use PC classes, monsters, and so on, from those editions?

Any other "old school" gamers who share Vince's opinion should widen their viewpoint a little to include people who aren't as "well-traveled" in the D&D world as they are.

Chuck Williams
Keokuk, IA

Dragon has always been cautious about presenting conversions, and more than 99% of the material that appears in the magazine is never-before-seen ideas. However, there will always be a few exceptional cases like the Saurials that are too intriguing and too popular to ignore, and that material will find its way into the magazine. Clearly we can't please everyone, but we'll keep trying to find the balance between new and veteran players.

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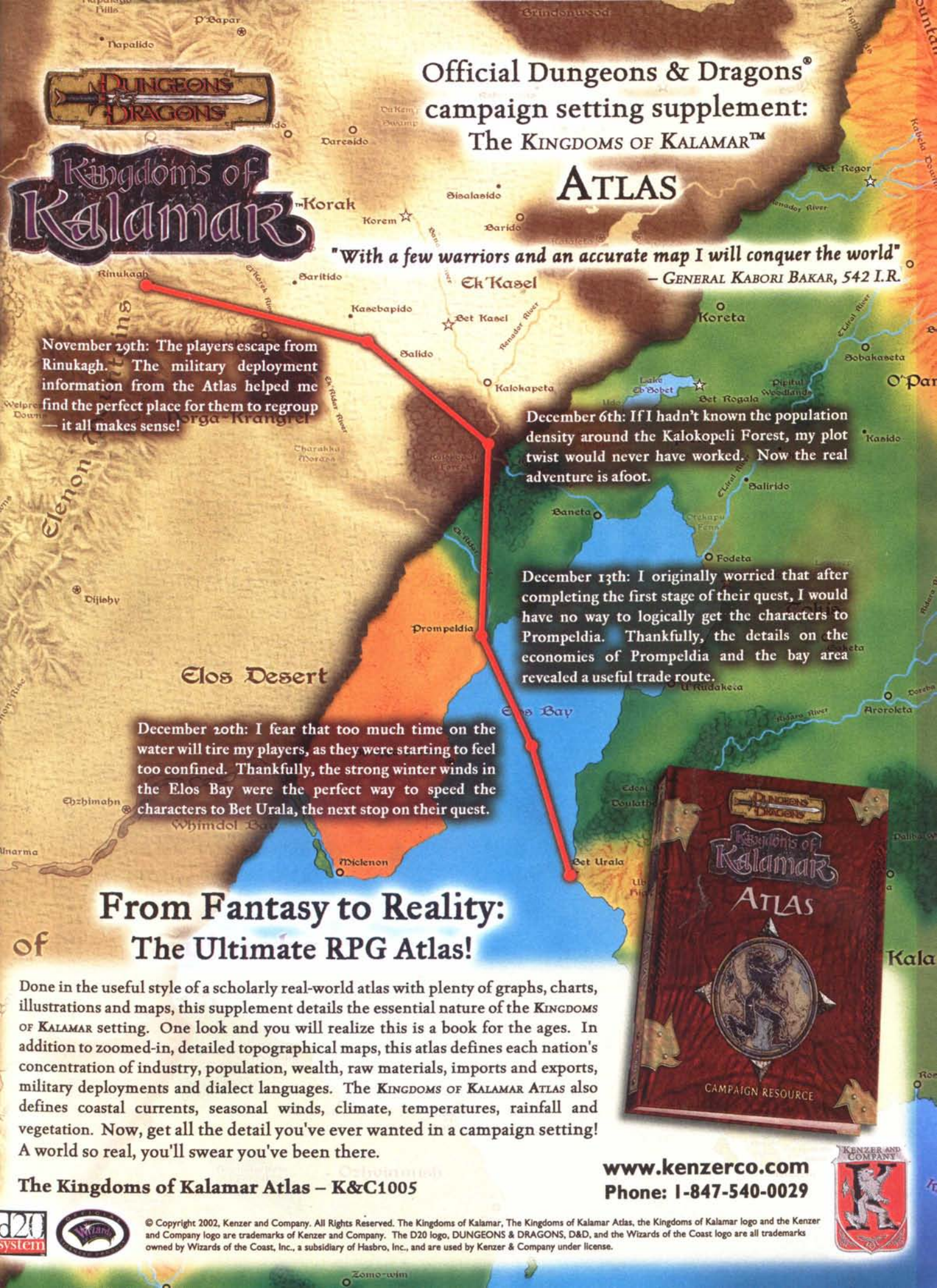
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November 29th: The players escape from Rinukagh. The military deployment information from the Atlas helped me find the perfect place for them to regroup — it all makes sense!
December 6th: If I hadn't known the population density around the Kalokopeli Forest, my plot twist would never have worked. Now the real adventure is afoot.
December 13th: I originally worried that after completing the first stage of their quest, I would have no way to logically get the characters to Prompeldia. Thankfully, the details on the economies of Prompeldia and the bay area revealed a useful trade route.
December 20th: I fear that too much time on the water will tire my players, as they were starting to feel too confined. Thankfully, the strong winter winds in the Elos Bay were the perfect way to speed the characters to Bet Urala, the next stop on their quest.
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Koreta
Salido
Kalokapeta
Prompeldia
Elos Desert
Elos Bay
Bet Urala
Miclenon
Fodeta
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Salirido
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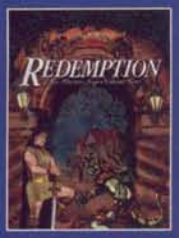

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AT THE **TABLE:**

Cavern and Dungeon Maps

This month, *DRAGON* presents you with two battlemaps for use in your games. Note that one is done in the style of issue #293's Cavern Tiles poster, and the other fits well with the Stone Tower poster in issue #295. In addition to the ideas below, consider the many ways this poster could be used with the previous posters. Perhaps the dungeon is a secret chamber beneath the tower, already there when the stronghold was built. The cavern tiles could be placed along any edge of the larger cavern map, allowing you to build many complex and intriguing battlegrounds. The cavern map and dungeon map might even form a link between the two map environments; maybe the pit in the dungeon map is actually a tunnel to the cavern tiles.

Map 1: Cavern

When using this map, consider the following:

A. Set Climb check DCs for the stalagmites and rock formations. Most of the stalagmites should have a Climb DC of 20, and the rock formations might have a Climb DC of 15.

B. Decide how tall the stalagmites and rock formations are. For instance, the stalagmites might range from 3 to 10 feet tall, providing cover for creatures fighting in the room. The rock formations along the edges could be much taller. If they're more than 10 feet high, you should probably increase their Climb DC to 20, representing the steeper surface.

C. Certain sections of the cavern floor are broken, revealing a dark dirt. Perhaps the "dirt" is actually sticky, quicksand-like mud. Creatures walking through nearby squares might need to make Balance checks (DC 12) to avoid putting a foot in one. Creatures that enter one of these squares become entangled as though by a tanglefoot bag.

D. The map seems to be lit from its center, and maybe you can use this as a feature in whatever combat takes place there. The most brightly lit sections of the center of the map might contain a huge bonfire, providing concealment from foes across the room and offering PCs and NPCs the opportunity to bull rush enemies into the flames.

Map 2: Dungeon

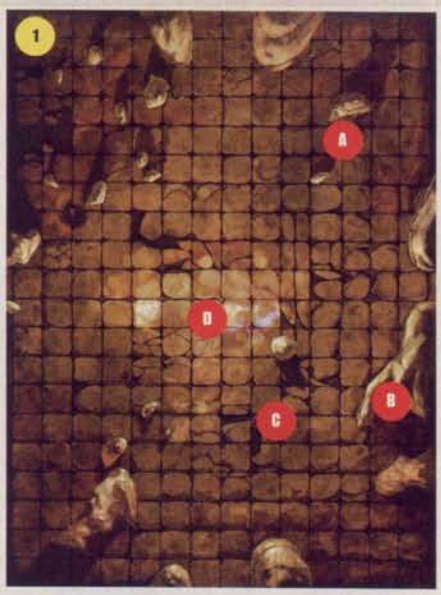
When using this map, consider the following:

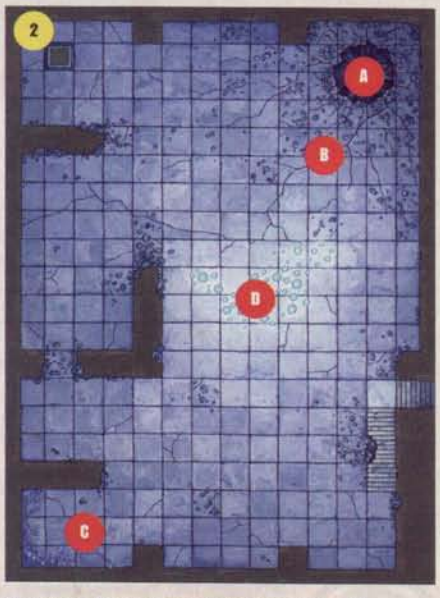
A. Define the nature of the pit in the corner. Decide its depth and the DC to climb in and out. Perhaps the bottom of the pit is as wide as its top (20 feet deep, Climb DC 25), or maybe there's only 5 feet of space at the bottom and the pits sides aren't so steep (10 feet deep, Climb DC 15).

B. The floor around the pit looks cracked and unstable. Maybe this acts as a natural trap, and creatures in the surrounding squares must make a Reflex saving throw or fall into the pit as part of the floor crumbles away. For example pit traps, see the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide* or *Song and Silence*. Dwarves and other creatures with the stonecunning ability get a free Search check to notice the danger as soon as they pass within 5 feet.

C. In the corner opposite the pit, there's a blue fungus or slime. This could represent a colony of green slime, yellow mold, brown mold, or a new hazard of your creation.

D. The glowing circles in the center could simply represent phosphorescent fungus, but maybe they define the area of some strange Enchantment effect that works like the bardic music *fascinate* ability. They could also be bowls in the floor, filled with a glowing contact poison. Alternatively, they could be something far stranger: bubbles filled with the dreams of demons; when one is popped, the creature responsible must make a Will save (DC 20) or live out the dream, acting *confused* for 3d4 rounds.





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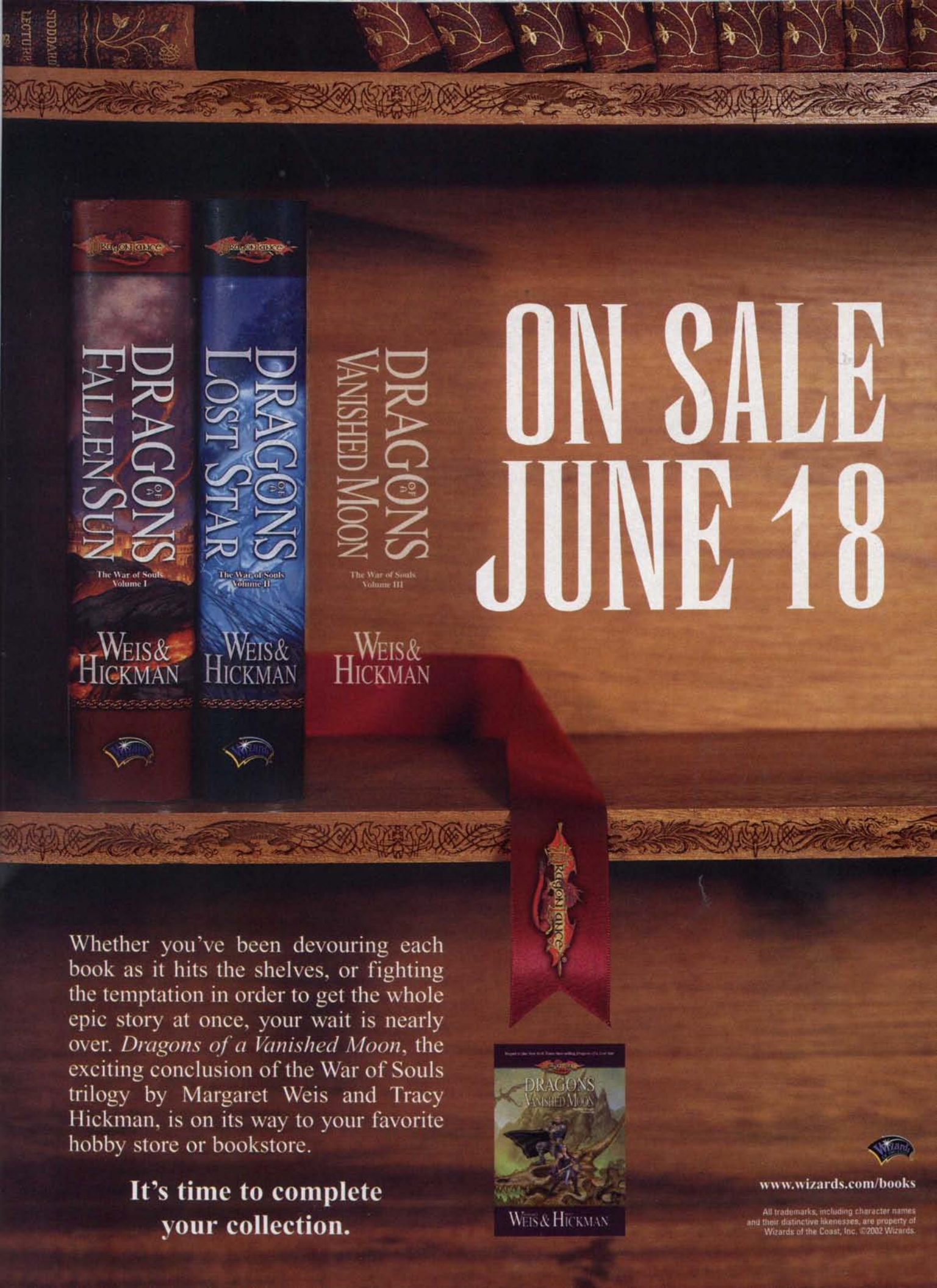
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Lesson 10

All I Need to Know I learned from D&D

The Rewards of Roleplaying

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Virtue Brings More Than Its Own Reward.

Back in those early halcyon days of D&D, all of my time was not spent developing the GREYHAWK campaign world and serving as Dungeon Master for the ever-growing throng of players. Indeed, after only a few weeks time, there were plenty of others working to create campaign settings. I was offered many opportunities to play in their games, and I did so in about a dozen different settings with as many different DMs. Thus came into being my first PC, Yrag, who often made an appearance at Rob Kuntz's game. Rob was an eager fledgling DM, and he took to the new game like the proverbial duck to water. This made playing in his campaign a lot of fun, and I did so whenever I could, side by side with many of the regulars from my own campaign.

It was in one such adventure that Rob introduced a new cursed magic item, the *ring of contrariness.* Likely because I was a very intense player myself, Rob made sure that Yrag ended up with the item. The doughty fighter being a risk taker, Yrag immediately put the ring on his finger. At that point, I was taken aside, and the properties of the ring were explained to me. Laughing silently to myself, I returned to the group. The area having been rid of monsters and everything not nailed down taken as a reward, someone asked, "What does the ring do?" To that Yrag replied, "None of your business!" As the adventure was just beginning, another player's character suggested that the matter be set aside until later, and he strode off, assuming the others would follow suit, which they did. Yrag, however, sat down and refused to budge. When the other PCs urged him to follow, Yrag responded, "No, I am staying here." Being a close-knit band, the others came back, saying they too would stay if that's what Yrag wished to do. "In that case, I am leaving," Yrag promptly muttered as he stalked off, leaving the others bewildered.

Then commenced a very lengthy exchange between various other members of the party and the recalcitrant fighter. After ten minutes of this, it became apparent to the other players that I was roleplaying, and that Yrag was under some malign magical influence that made him uncooperative. After a number of mishaps, the group finally came up with a means of defeating the curse—they knocked out the hapless fighter, carried him out of the dungeons, and found a cleric to cast *remove curse.*

All of the other players enjoyed the episode immensely, even if the other rewards had been few, because the fun of solving the problem and the roleplaying that went with it had been very satisfying. Better still, of course, the DM approved of my efforts. As I continued to extend myself in both roleplaying and problem-solving efforts, the gaming became better and better. Of course, greater challenges were in store, and along with them came greater rewards in experience points and magical items.

The lesson learned was very much akin to that of being in a classroom. Do your best, listen to the professor, and deliver what he expects, and you'll likely succeed. There are differences between D&D and the classroom, of course: Along with learning about some of the later rewards gained in adventuring, you'll see that there are no "teacher's pets" when it comes to the perils of the fantasy milieu. D

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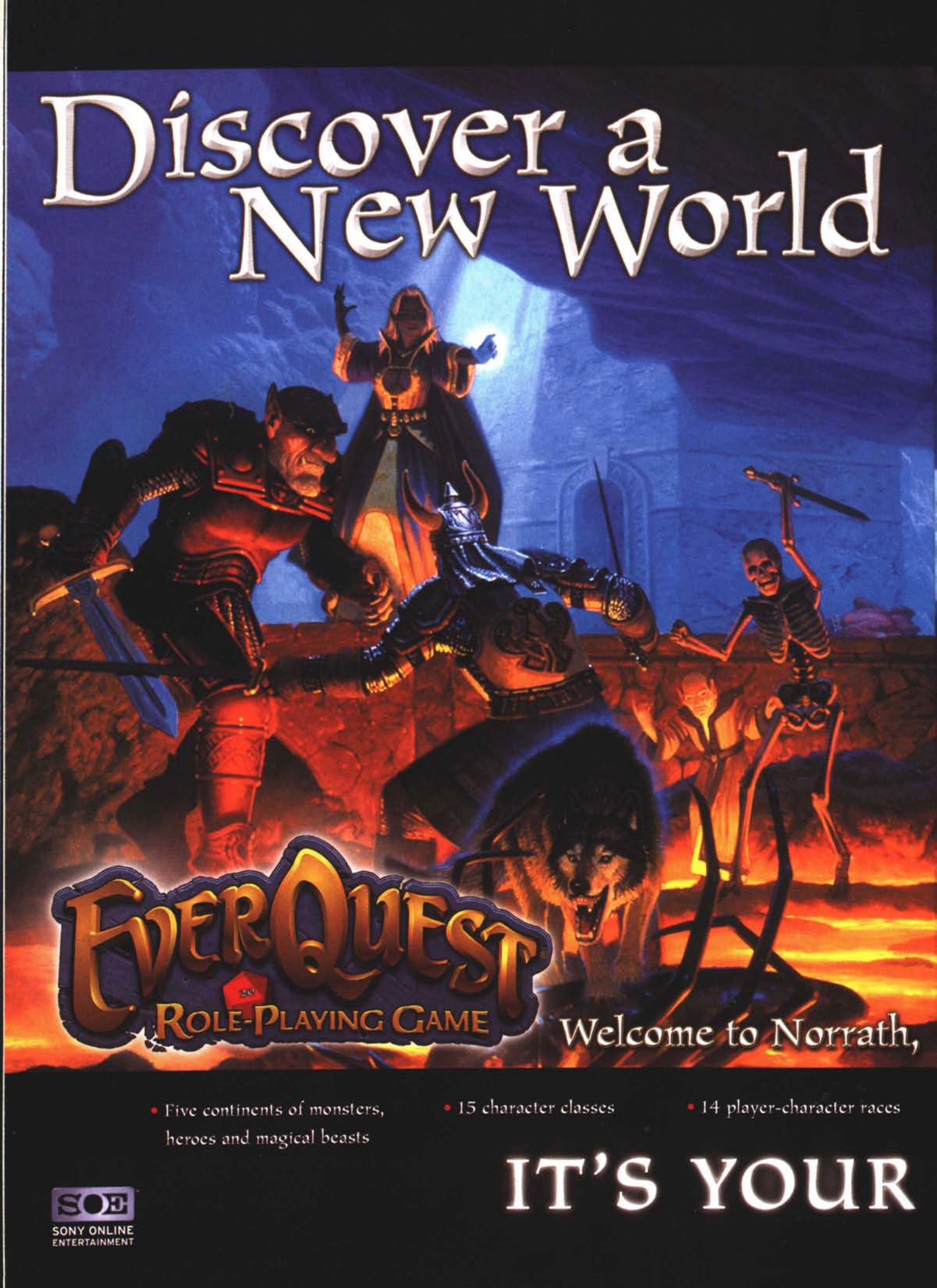
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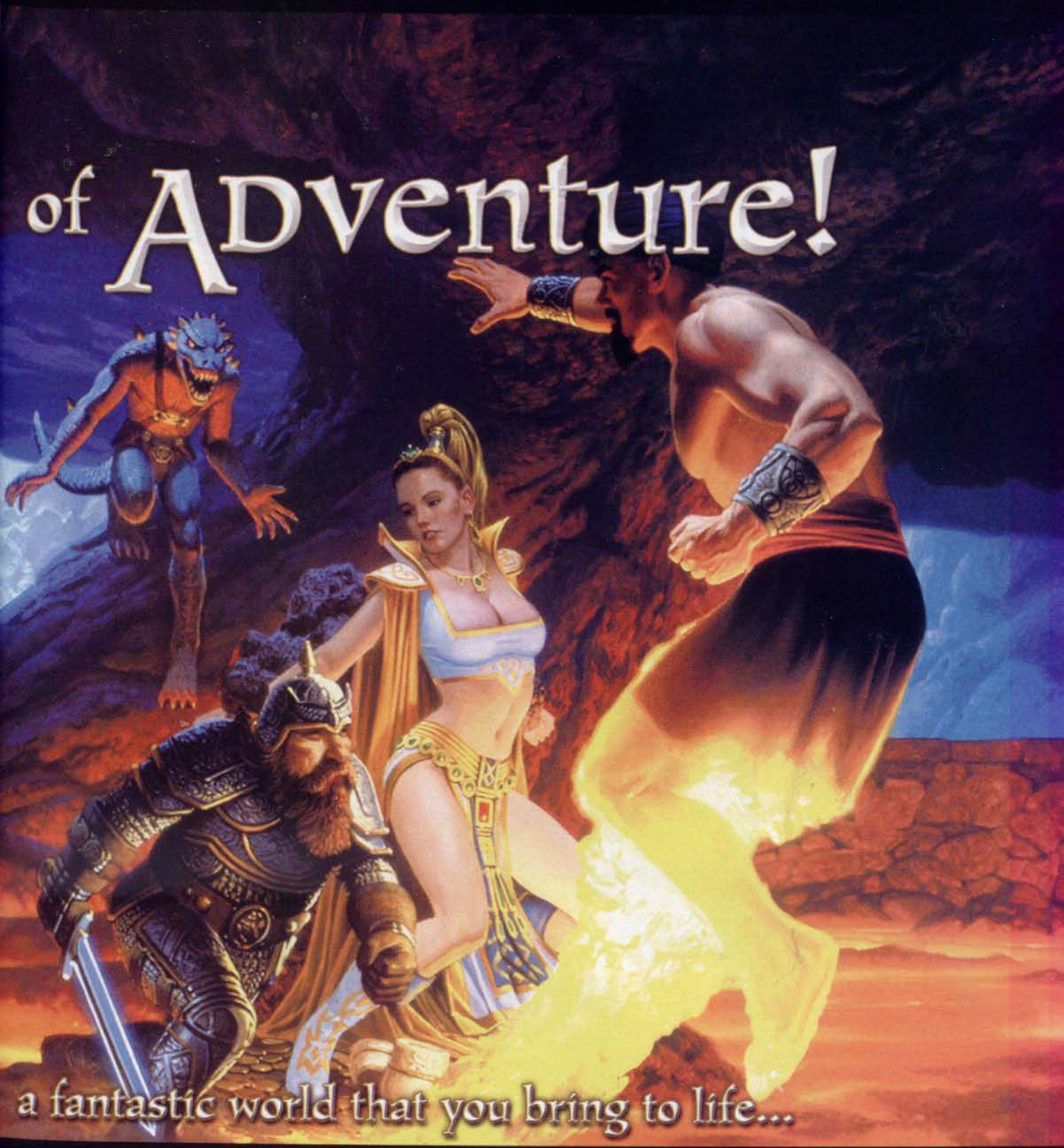

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SENTINELS of the SHOAL

NEW Epic Spells, Feats, and Prestige Classes for Your Game

by James Jacobs • illustrated by Dennis Callero & Greg Staples

Ages ago, the world of mortals and the divine were nearly as one. The deities were pleased with their creations and showered them with gifts and potent abilities. Many heroes of great skill and power walked the lands, raising mighty armies, fighting fearsome beasts, and undertaking quests that shook the foundations of reality. But then something happened. . . .

A single mortal whose name has been erased from time managed to rise in power above the gods and attempted to bring the mortal realm under his command. Today, only the most obscure references to this powerful mortal survive; he is known even then only as the Lost Scion and is held by those few who know of his legend as the first dead god. The gods were appalled by this attempted theft of their worshipers and acted quickly to solve the problem. As the Lost Scion attempted to wrest control of creation from the gods, they came at him and stripped from him his life and knowledge, casting the shell of his body and soul into the depths of the Astral Plane. The gods then stripped from other mortals their knowledge and capacity to reach such great heights of power. They took this combined knowledge and secreted it away in the depths of the sea to hide it from the mortal realm, and then they pondered what to do with it.

It seemed a waste to destroy such potent knowledge, and the gods hoped that someday the mortal realm would become responsible enough to wield such power once again. As the eons flew by, mortals eventually forgot the epic powers they once wielded, and eventually, even the gods found more important things to occupy their time.

THE SENTINELS

A mere six hundred years ago, the knowledge was rediscovered by a powerful druid by the name of Shadar. This human druid loved the sea, and with his powerful magic, he explored many of its secrets. He found a pool of dense liquid in a cavern in a deep sea trench and quickly recognized it for what it was; the liquefied knowledge of the ancients. He also knew that the powers granted by the pool could disrupt the delicate balance of the mortal realm. Shadar decided to put aside his adventuring days and founded a highly secretive order of guardians known as the Sentinels of Shadar, selecting their numbers by hand and with great diligence and care. Each of them were allowed to bathe in the fluid of the pool, which came to be known as the Shadar Pool; those who did so were enhanced and granted the power to transcend normal mortal ken and become epic-level characters. Most of these Sentinels traveled the lands in secret, using the powers granted to them by the pool to maintain balance between order and entropy, good and evil. A select few remained below the sea in a large complex warded with traps and guardians and made comfortable for any who choose (and were allowed) to visit. These sentinels, along with Shadar, stood watch over the pool to insure that only those who would not abuse its power could ever gain access.

Eventually, even a being as powerful as Shadar moves on. His death left his followers grief stricken, but they continued their tasks of guarding the Shadar Pool and watching the balance to honor his memory. Nevertheless, with his passing, the Sentinels began to slowly drift apart. More and more

SPOILER ALERT!

If your DM intends to run the *Dungeon Magazine* adventure, "The Razing of Redshore," be warned that this article contains spoilers to some of the surprises contained therein. After running through that adventure, your character should be epic level and ready to take the feats, use the spells, or take levels in the prestige classes presented in this article. You might even be able to take on epic-level NPCs like those described at the end of this article.

For Your Character

The feats, prestige classes, and spells presented in this article are ready for use by your epic-level characters. With your DM's permission, you can change the flavor of the game elements to better fit your character. The Shadar sentinel need not be a guardian of the Shadar Pool or have any particular love of nature. *Golem seed* could summon a *hasted* beholder or some other CR 13 monster. In a truly high-level game, you might even be able to use Tesseril as your character

of their number opted to wander the dimensions and outer planes rather than stay to guard the Shadar Pool. Eventually, only one guardian remained, an elven druid by the name of Tesseril. Tesseril grew paranoid and fearful as the years wore on, afraid to leave her post lest someone undeserving gain access to the pool. She enhanced the wards and guardians of the Shadar Caverns, and even used her magic to awaken several whales, giant squid, and other deep-sea animals to serve as guardians.

Recently, her fears were realized in a tragic fashion. She was ambushed by an ex-Sentinel by the name of Yaervilar who had joined the Shadow Shoal, a secretive group of assassins, and although she managed to defeat the traitor, she was herself slain and her spirit was absorbed by the Shadar Pool. Today, the Sentinels of Shadar might well be gone forever, unless a new band of heroes can act quickly to restore the order to life.

Using the Sentinels

The Sentinels of Shadar would make an excellent organization to help guide a group of new epic-level characters who are unsure of their newfound powers. Ideally, this should be the same group of characters who managed to foil the plots of the Shadow Shoal and revive Tesseril in the adventure "The Razing of Redshore," which appears in issue #92 of *Dungeon Magazine*. Once she is restored to life, Tesseril gladly welcomes any like-minded heroes to her side to aid the task of guarding the Shadar Pool. The most important thing to begin with would be to reestablish the secret presence of the Sentinels in the world. Since the society's decline, many of their various holdings throughout the world have been abandoned; these holdings are located in out-of-the-way regions. Many of them are doubtless now the lairs of powerful monsters or even disillusioned ex-Sentinels; seeking out and reclaiming these sites would make an excellent series of adventures for new epic-level characters, as would searching for and testing new recruits. As the characters grow stronger and stronger, Tesseril sends them on correspondingly more difficult tasks. She might ask the group to find a way to determine if her assassin Yaervilar is truly dead, sending them on several

daring raids against other Shadow Shoal interests and holdings, or she might even send them to other planes and dimensions to make contact with distant chapters of the Sentinels that might still function. The characters might then qualify to take levels of the Shadar Sentinel prestige class.

Eventually, the characters might grow more powerful than Tesseril. Before this happens, you should have her retire or even possibly be slain by agents of the Shadow Shoal. At this point, control of the Sentinels can pass to the players. They should soon find that keeping all of their Sentinel recruits happy and the reclaimed sites functional becomes a task unto itself. At the same time, they become obvious targets for the Shadow Shoal. Don't be surprised if the players find new things for the Sentinels to do. Sooner or later, Lascer becomes interested in them as well. Lascer is a potent enemy and would make an excellent recurring villain for extremely high-level epic characters.

You can also use the Sentinels as an enemy of the party. Perhaps the group has fallen out of Tesseril's graces or has managed to rise to epic level without bathing in the Shadar Pool. In this case, you should have Tesseril and her resources grow just ahead of the party, so that the Sentinels can serve as a constant thorn in their sides until eventually the party grows powerful enough to confront the rebuilt organization at its base.

THE SHADOW SHOAL

The Shadow Shoal is a highly secretive group of assassins founded by a powerful infernal by the name of Lascer. Imprisoned between the Astral Plane and the Region of Dreams, Lascer can nonetheless travel the dimensions and influence events and individuals in reality. He believes that if he can gather together enough followers on enough worlds and spread enough fear in his name, he'll be able to escape his prison. To further this goal, he established hundreds of assassin sects on as many different worlds and planes. Each of these sects is led by a master chosen by Lascer whom he infuses with great power. This interplanar network of assassins is known as the Shadow Shoal, and only its leaders suspect that there are multiple branches of the Shoal on different worlds. Whenever a new sect of the Shadow Shoal is firmly established, Lascer moves on to a new dimension or world to seed another. He hopes one day to create a network of assassins so vast that he can use their resources to return to his home plane and make a bid for power.

Lascer's chosen leader for the world of the Shadar Pool was a powerful wizard/assassin by the name of Yaervilar. Yaervilar was also a member of the Sentinels of Shadar, but he grew disillusioned with that society's aims and goals. He turned to various forbidden texts, and he was eventually contacted by Lascer and perverted to his will. Yaervilar quickly established a new sect of the Shadow Shoal in this world, and using his new power and minions, launched an attack on the final guardian of the Shadar Pool in an attempt to gain control of the artifact. The attack failed, though, and Yaervilar was slain, leaving his three powerful followers to take up the reins of this world's chapter of the Shadow Shoal. If your party plays through "The Razing of Redshore," they have a chance to stop these three assassins from re-establishing the Shadow Shoal in the world.

Using the Shadow Shoal

Even if the current group of Shadow Shoal leaders are defeated in "The Razing of Redshore," the unique multidimensional nature of this organization allows you to continue using it as a recurring enemy in your epic campaign. Since Yaervilar was in fairly regular contact with several other chapters of the Shoal, the destruction of these cells will not go unnoticed. Not long after the party destroys the last minions of Yaervilar, bands of assassins from other worlds and realms begin to secretly infiltrate their world and establish small Shadow Shoal cells of their own. These bands of assassins should be highly varied in their abilities, appearance, and personality; although they are bonded by a common theme, they come from all manner of worlds, and their makeup should reflect this. As the party continues to adventure, have them periodically attacked by strange groups of assassins, each bearing the same strange tattoo. Before long, the party should become convinced (and rightly so) that the Shadow Shoal is out to get them, but

If You Don't Have the *Epic Level Handbook*

To get the full benefit of this article, you need to use the *Epic Level Handbook*. Not yet ready for epic-level games? Don't worry; by considering the elements of this article and doing a little planning for the future, you can prepare your player character or your players for epic-level play.

Not planning on playing in a game with epic-level characters? Never fear; with a little creativity, you can use the elements of this article right away.

Feats: Some of the epic feats could be feats for characters without epic levels; Destructive Attack, Infusion of Balance, Lingering Death, and Staggering Strike are particularly good candidates. Simply add more prerequisite feats and make sure that relatively high-level characters can take the feats only if they dedicate themselves to the pursuit.

Feats like Battle Dance, Legendary Sniper, and Quicken Wildshape make great high-level prestige class abilities or magic item qualities.

You could also create a place in the world or an artifact that grants an epic feat to everyone in an area. Then you could have fantastic epic-style battles with lower-level characters.

Spells: The spells presented in this article make great powers for magic items and artifacts in your game. Perhaps the *golem seed* spell is actually a *golem seed* magic item. The spells could also be unique effects produced by legendary monsters in your game; an efreeti might not be much of a challenge to a 15th-level party, but an efreeti who constantly emanates a *nimbus* spell is a potent threat.

Prestige Classes: The class abilities of the prestige classes presented in this article can be altered and used like the feats and spells. They make excellent magic item qualities, high-level prestige class abilities, monster powers, or powerful feats.

NPCs: The NPCs in this article are incredibly powerful; perhaps they could be worshiped as gods in your campaign. The statistics blocks presented in this article could represent the gods themselves or some powerful avatar.

since these killers hail from throughout the multiverse, it should be nearly impossible to stop them. Eventually, the party should learn of Lascer and how he recruits new assassins and seeds worlds with the Shoal; only by confronting the powerful abomination in his prison between the Astral Plane and the Region of Dreams can they stop the Shadow Shoal menace.

If you are running an epic campaign for evil characters, the Shadow Shoal can serve as an excellent patron. A new recruit into the Shoal is selected (usually without the recruit's knowledge) by a Shoal leader; the recruit must have at least one level of assassin and must perform a difficult assassination for the Shoal without promise of a reward. If the recruit is successful, she is adopted into the Shoal and branded with a Shadow Shoal tattoo. This tattoo is placed over the recruit's heart, and it protects the new member with a continual *freedom of movement* effect as though cast by a 20th-level wizard and renders the assassin immune to many Shadow Shoal traps. The tattoo is effectively a magical item that cannot be removed, except by powerful magic like *miracle, Mordenkainen's disjunction,* or *wish.* Once a new recruit is accepted, he is expected to follow the commands of his leaders without question.

NEW EPIC MATERIAL

Each of these epic feats, spells, and prestige classes are presented and can be acquired in the same way as detailed in the *Epic Level Handbook.* These epic game elements are tied to the epic societies presented in this article; if you do not use the Shadow Shoal or the Sentinels of Shadar in your campaign, you should substitute these requirements for a similar organization in your own game. In Greyhawk, this might be the Circle of Eight or the Bonehart; in the Forgotten Realms it could be the Harpers or the Night Masks.

NEW Epic Feats

Each feat has a special prerequisite if you are using the two organizations presented in this article; they can only be taken by members of the appropriate society. Quicken Wildshape and Infusion of Balance require that the character be a member of the Sentinels; all others require that the character be an assassin for the Shadow Shoal.

Battle Dance [Epic]

You are so graceful and nimble in combat that you gain bonuses to Reflex saving throws, attack rolls, and Armor Class.

Prerequisites: Dex 21+, Cha 21+, Perform 30+ ranks.

Benefit: Whenever you are in melee combat, you gain an insight bonus to your Armor Class, attack rolls, and Reflex saving throws equal to your Charisma bonus.

Destructive Attack [Epic]

You can destroy plants, undead, and constructs with your death attack.

Prerequisites: Death attack ability, Improved Death Attack, Power Attack, Str 21+.

Benefit: You can make death attacks against plant, undead, and construct targets. If the target fails to resist your destructive attack, it is destroyed (reduced to 0 hit points). The target struck suffers any sneak attack damage from the attack as well, even though plants, undead, and constructs are normally immune to sneak attack damage; this damage comes from the sheer power of the assassin's destructive attack.

Normal: Without this feat, an assassin's death attack cannot harm plants, undead, or constructs; these creature types are immune to sneak attack damage.

Infusion of Balance [Epic]

You can make full use of certain magical weapons that are keyed to specific alignments, and you gain protection from similar magical attacks.

Prerequisites: Cha 19+, neutral component of alignment.

Benefit: You are infused with a balance of cosmic energies, and as a result need not fear the detrimental effects of manipulating certain magic items. You can use weapons with the following magical qualities as if you were of the most beneficial alignment: chaotic, lawful, holy, and unholy.

Additionally, you can avoid attacks that use chaotic, evil, good, or lawful energies through sheer force of will. If you make a successful saving throw against an attack that has any of the

above descriptors (such as the *chaos hammer* spell) and that normally causes half damage on a successful save, you instead take no damage. This is an extraordinary ability.

Legendary Sniper [Epic]

Your ability to make ranged attacks from hiding is legendary.

Prerequisites: Hide 24+ ranks, Skill Focus (hide), Dex 21+.

Benefit: If you've already successfully hidden at least 10 feet from your target, you can make one ranged attack and then immediately hide again as a move-equivalent action without suffering a penalty to your Hide check.

In addition, when you make a sneak attack with a ranged weapon, you deal +1 point of damage per die of sneak attack damage you deal.

Normal: If you've already successfully hidden at least 10 feet from your target, you can make one ranged attack and then immediately hide again as a move-equivalent action, but to suffer a -20 circumstance penalty to your Hide check.

Lingering Death [Epic]

A failed death attack continues to threaten the target for an additional round.

Prerequisites: Death attack ability, Improved Death Attack, Cha 21+.

Benefit: Any death attack you make that deals extra sneak attack damage but fails to kill its target continues to pose a threat. On your turn on the round after the failed death attack, the target must make a second Fortitude saving throw against the death attack to avoid being slain.

Special: This feat can be taken multiple times; each time it is taken, the number of rounds the lingering death remains (and the number of extra Fortitude saves to resist it) increases by 1.

Quicken Wildshape [Epic]

You can change shapes with wildshape instantly.

Prerequisites: Fast Wildshape (from *Masters of the Wild*), Dex 21+.

Benefit: You can change forms using your wildshape ability as a free action. This counts toward the limit of one quickened spell or spell-like ability per round.

Normal: A druid normally uses wildshape as a standard action.

Staggering Strike [Epic]

Your sneak attacks are particularly demoralizing and painful.

Prerequisites: Sneak attack +8d6, Str 21+.

Benefit: Any time you inflict damage with a sneak attack, you can choose to forgo a number of additional dice of sneak attack damage to make a staggering strike. A creature struck with a staggering strike must make a Fortitude saving throw (DC = 10 + your Strength modifier + the number of sneak attack dice sacrificed) or only take a partial action when he would otherwise be allowed to act normally for a number of rounds equal to the number of sneak attack dice sacrificed.

NEW Epic Spells

Four of these epic spells (*dracomorph, golem seed, nimbus,* and *Shadar's primal devastation)* were developed by the powerful druid Shadar in ages past. Since then, many powerful members of the Shadow Shoal have managed to learn the spells as well. Many of the most powerful members of the Shadow Shoal are taught *oath of binding* by Lascer; it is conceivable that members of other religions or societies could research variants of *oath of binding* unique to their own beliefs but with similar benefits. Fragmentary notes on this spell doubtless still exist in one of Lascer's secret lairs, waiting to be discovered.

Dracomorph

Transmutation
Spellcraft DC: 107
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 10 minutes
Range: 300 ft.
Target: One creature
Duration: 24 hours
Saving Throw: Fortitude negates (harmless)
Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)
Development: 963,000 gp; 20 days; 38,520 XP. Seed: Transform into adult bronze dragon (DC 94), dragon type, huge size, gain breath weapon, frightful presence, immunities, damage reduction 5/+1, spell resistance, and new form has 21 HD; Seed: Fortify +6 enhancement to Strength, Dexterity, natural armor, SR in new form (DC 41); mitigating factor: reduce permanent duration to 24 hours (ad hoc -10 DC); mitigating factor: increase casting time to 10 minutes (-18 DC).

This spell, now lost to time, represents the height of Shadar's power, for it allowed him to transform the other Shadar Sentinels into bronze dragons of exceptional strength and power. The magic of this spell can only affect Medium-size humanoids; in addition, the target must have at least 21 Hit Dice (in other words, the target must be epic level). The magic is simply too powerful to be contained by a lesser mortal.

When you cast this spell, both you and the target glow in a shimmering bronze light. As the spellcasting continues, the light grows brighter and brighter until finally, as the casting completes, the target seems to explode in a blast of bronze-colored energy, accompanied by the roar of an enraged dragon. The target's body turns bronze, flies apart into a million fragments, and then reassembles into the new draconic shape all in the span of a few seconds.

Upon the completion of the casting of *dracomorph,* the target instantly transforms into an adult bronze dragon. This grants the target the Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution scores of the dragon (Strength 27, Dexterity 10, Constitution 21). The target also gains the dragon's +20 natural armor bonus, natural size (Huge), new speeds (40 ft., fly 150 ft. [poor], swim 60 ft.), blindsight, keen senses, scent, water breathing, and natural attacks. Additionally, the power of the spell allows the target to use the dragon's breath weapons (a line of lightning or a cone of repulsion gas); its frightful presence; its immunity to electricity, sleep, and paralysis; its damage reduction 5/+1; and its spell resistance of 22. The target does not gain any of the dragon's spell-like abilities or spellcasting powers. The target's Intelligence, Wisdom, Charisma, alignment, level, class, hit points (despite any change in Constitution), base attack bonus, base saves, spells, and spell-like abilities remain the same and are still completely usable in dragon form.

The power of a *dracomorph* spell goes even farther; it infuses the target with vitality and power, providing a +6 enhancement bonus to his new Strength, Dexterity, natural armor, and spell resistance.

Golem Seed

Conjuration (Summoning)
Spellcraft DC: 58
Components: V, S, M, XP, Ritual
Casting Time: 10 minutes
Range: Touch
Effect: One enhanced iron golem
Duration: 20 rounds
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No
Development: 522,000 gp; 11 days; 20,880 XP. Seed: Summon an iron golem (DC 46); Seed: Armor +10 armor to golem (DC 26); Seed: Transport hasted golem (DC 23); Seed: Contact telepathic bond (DC 23); factor: caster can "pause" the spell (ad hoc +25 DC); mitigating factor: unusual material component (ad hoc -2 DC); mitigating factor: +9 minutes to cast (-18 DC); mitigating factor: burn 1,000 XP (-10 DC); mitigating factor: 5 additional casters contributing a 7th-level spell slot (-65 DC).

You can summon a magically enhanced iron golem to do your bidding. Casting *golem seed* requires seven additional casters to aid you, each of whom must contribute a 7th-level spell or spell slot to the casting. When this spell is cast on a specially crafted iron statuette (the "seed"), you have the option of triggering the effect of the spell then or pausing the effect. You can later trigger the spell as a standard action by hurling the statuette to the ground wherever you wish the iron golem to appear.

When *golem seed* is activated, the seed emits an ear-piercing screech like thousands of sheets of jagged metal scraping together. The tiny statuette unfolds from the inside out, growing bigger with each unfolding, until finally it reaches its full height and form: that of an iron golem.

This iron golem is *hasted* and gains a +10 armor bonus from a second skin of pure magical force. Although the golem is mindless, you can telepathically control the golem's every action as a free action. If the golem finishes its task before the duration of the spell expires, you can pause the spell again as a standard action. This returns the golem to the place whence it came and restores the golem statuette to your possession. When you summon forth the golem again, its magical armor and *haste* effects are re-established (even if they were dispelled in a previous summoning), and all damage and afflictions on the golem are healed. Only the original caster can activate or pause *golem seed*. When *golem seed* is inactive, the spell is effectively still in effect and can persist in this state indefinitely, unless it is dispelled by another source.

The theory holds that there exists some huge extradimensional storage facility wherein countless iron golems for use with this spell are stored; Shadar discovered this spell on one of his interplanar journeys but never found out where the golems summoned by the seeds come from.

Material Component: The material component for this spell is a small articulated iron statuette of the golem that weighs 3 pounds and is worth 600 gp due to the lifelike detail and artistry of the work. The caster of this spell must create the statuette herself using Craft (metalworking) or Craft (sculpture); the DC to create the statuette is 25.

XP Cost: 1,000 XP.

Nimbus

Evocation
Spellcraft DC: 77
Components: V, S, XP
Casting Time: 5 minutes
Range: Personal
Target: You
Duration: 20 hours
Saving Throw: Reflex half (see text)
Spell Resistance: Yes (see text)
Development: 693,000 gp; 14 days; 27,720 XP. Seed: Energy emanates fire for 20d6 fire damage (DC 55); Seed: Ward against undead (DC 17); mitigating factor: change touch range to personal (-2 DC); factor: caster can determine who is harmed by fire (ad hoc +10 DC); mitigating factor: damage die increases by 2 steps vs. undead only (ad hoc +10 DC); mitigating factor: 4 additional minutes casting time (-8 DC); mitigating factor: burn 500 XP (-5 DC).

You transform your blood into searing golden light. This light causes your circulatory system to shine harmlessly (but dramatically) through your skin; your heart appears as a pulsating sun. The light bleeds from your eyes, nose, mouth, and even your pores, causing great pain and damage to those nearby but leaving you unharmed.

This light emanates from you to a radius of 10 feet, inflicting 20d6 points of fire damage per round against unprotected creatures; a successful Reflex save reduces this damage by half. You can select creatures or objects in the emanation zone to be immune to the damage as a free action, but once a creature or object is made immune to damage from the spell you cannot change your mind; in order to affect them you must cast the spell a second time. You may only have one *nimbus* active at any one time. While it is active, the *nimbus* provides light in a 120 foot radius.

The power of the *nimbus* is especially effective against undead. Against undead targets, the damage done increases to 20d10 points of fire damage per round of exposure, with a successful Reflex save reducing the damage by half. Additionally, *nimbus* prevents all undead from coming into bodily contact with the caster, which causes the natural attacks of such creatures to fail. Undead can not voluntarily enter the area of *nimbus*, and if they do take damage they must retreat beyond the reach of the *nimbus* unless the spell fails to overcome the creature's SR. This protection ends against a specific target only if you make an attack against that target or if you purposefully move to within 5 feet of the creature when all escape routes are blocked.

XP Cost: 500 XP.

Oath of Binding

Abjuration
Spellcraft DC: 78
Components: V, S, XP, Ritual
Casting Time: 10 minutes
Range: Touch
Target: Creature touched
Duration: Permanent (D)
Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless)
Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)
Development: 702,000 gp; 15 days; 28,080 XP. Seed: Fortify +5 enhancement bonus to any three statistics (DC 47); Seed: Ward bludgeoning/slashing/piercing resistance 5/– (DC 18); factor: permanent duration (DC x5); factor: dismissable by caster (+2 DC); mitigating factor: burn 10,000 XP (-100 DC); mitigating factor: 9 additional minutes of casting time (-18 DC); mitigating factor: 7 additional casters contributing an epic-level spell slot (-133 DC); mitigating factor: target affected by *geas/quest* to serve the precepts of the oath (ad hoc -6 DC).

The *oath of binding* is a ritual spell often performed by powerful members of the Shadow Shoal to reward those who have served their sinister lord. No less than seven additional casters must aid the primary caster of this spell, and each must contribute an epic-level spell or spell slot to the casting.

When successfully cast, the target of the spell must agree to pledge his soul and life to Lascer and to further the goals of the Shadow Shoal. As the target of this spell accepts the oath, a spectral image of Lascer manifests before the target. The spectral Lascer grins sardonically just before it runs the victim through with its twin rapiers. As the target seems to die, the powerful illusion vanishes, leaving the individual unharmed except for a pair of tiny discolorations on the chest where the spectral rapiers struck. This is Lascer's none-too-subtle way to warn the subject of the spell to remain true to his evil ways.

The subject is immediately affected by a *geas/quest,* and if he ever goes against the teachings of the Shadow Shoal or betrays another member, he suffers the full effects of the *geas/quest* and the beneficial effects of the *oath of binding* are lost forever. An *oath of binding* can only be cast upon a specific target once; any additional castings automatically fail (but still cost the caster 10,000 XP points).

As long as the recipient of this spell holds his oath with Lascer, he gains a +5 inherent bonus to any three ability scores of his choosing and gains damage reduction 5/–. The caster of the spell can dismiss the effects of the oath as long as he and the target are on the same plane; doing so removes the *geas/quest* without harm to the recipient.

XP Cost: 10,000 XP.

Shadar's Primal Devastation

Transmutation
Spellcraft DC: 202
Components: V, S, XP
Casting Time: 1 minute
Range: 12,000 ft.
Area: 300-ft.-radius spread
Duration: Instantaneous (see text)
Saving Throw: Fortitude half (see text)
Spell Resistance: Yes
Development: 1,818,000 gp; 37 days; 72,720 XP. Seed: Destroy 40d6 damage (DC 69); Seed: Summon CR 35 monster (DC 66); factor: change target to area (+10 DC); factor: increase area to 300-ft.-radius spread (+62 DC); mitigating factor: 20d6 backlash damage (-20 DC); mitigating factor: burn 1,500 XP (-15 DC); mitigating factor: increase damage die by 3 steps (+30 DC).

The legendary *Shadar's primal devastation* is one of Shadar's greatest achievements, rivaled only by *dracomorph.* Since his death, only a few have managed to learn this difficult spell, and it has not been cast in living memory. When the *Shadar's primal devastation* is invoked, the targeted area is blasted with pure destructive force. All creatures and objects in the area suffer 40d12 points of damage. Creatures and objects slain or destroyed by this blast are reduced to a fine powder; the typical remains of a region blasted by this spell resemble a large dusty crater.

This is only the beginning of the terror. Following the blast, the energies summoned by this spell arc down from above and burst forth from the ground below simultaneously in a storm that condenses at the center and solidifies into a primal elemental of the caster's choice. The primal elemental remains for 20 rounds and is usually quite adept at destroying anything that happened to survive the initial blast.

The caster suffers 20d6 backlash damage when this spell is cast.

XP Cost: 1,500 XP.

NEW EPIC PRESTIGE CLASSES

Both of these new prestige classes are unique to the Sentinels of Shadar or the Shadow Shoal, although you can modify them with ease to fit your campaign if you choose not to use either of these two epic societies.

The Shadar Sentinel

Those who have bathed in the liquid knowledge of the Shadar Pool know that lore is the most potent weapon. Without knowledge, one can hardly hope to wield a weapon or cast a spell with any modicum of skill. An unfortunate majority of those who bathe in the pool are quick to abuse the powers granted by its might,

but a select few realize that such power should not be made available to all. Power given so freely without the discipline required to earn it leads to irresponsibility and ultimately tragedy. Yet those who choose to learn and study the gifts of the Shadar Pool rather than to just abuse the power soon find that there are greater secrets hidden in the self that can be awakened with the pool's aid, given time and due diligence.

Shadar Sentinels are those who have pledged to guard and protect the Shadar Pool from power-hungry abuse. A few choose to stay close to the pool to defend it, but the majority of those who pledge their lives to the Pool's defense are expected to travel and seek out others who might be ready to taste its power, while at the same time keep an eye out and prevent those who should not. They strive to make sure that one force does not rise in power above the other, that all sides of power are balanced so that one does not dominate and leave the world in ruin.

The majority of Shadar Sentinels are divine spellcasters, especially druids. Wizards are also common sentinels, since they are often intrigued by the knowledge the pool has to offer. Martial classes can become Shadar Sentinels, although they are much less common since they tend to be more focused on material or social wealth rather than spiritual or intellectual wealth.

Shadar Sentinel Class

Requirements

To qualify to become a Shadar sentinel, a character must fulfill all the following criteria:

Alignment: Any neutral.
Knowledge (History): 21 ranks.
Knowledge (Nature): 21 ranks.
Spellcraft: 21 ranks.
Feats: Alertness, Iron Will, Epic Skill Focus (any of the required Knowledge skills).

Shadar Sentinel Class Skills

The Shadar sentinel's class skills (and the key abilities for each) are:

Str: –
Dex: –
Con: Concentration.
Int: Craft, Knowledge (any, taken separately), Scry, Search, Spellcraft.
Wis: Innuendo, Listen, Profession, Sense Motive, Spot.
Cha: Diplomacy, Gather Information, Perform.

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier.

Shadar Sentinel Advancement

HIT DIE D8

Levels	Special
1st	Sudden insight 1/day, *aurasight*
2nd	*Spell-like Divination*
3rd	Shadar insight
4th	Sudden insight 2/day
5th	Bonus feat
6th	Shadar insight
7th	Sudden insight 3/day
8th	*Spell-like Enchantment*
9th	Shadar insight
10th	Sudden insight 4/day

Class Features

All the following are features of the Shadar sentinel prestige class.

Sudden Insight (Su): Once a day at 1st level, a Shadar sentinel may invoke a special insight into a situation. Invoking an insight is a free action, and it grants the Shadar sentinel a +10 insight bonus to any one attack roll, saving throw, skill check, or level check made in the same round the insight was activated. At every third level after 1st (at 4th, 7th, 10th, 13th, and so on), the Shadar sentinel may make an additional insight each day.

Aurasight (Sp): At will, a 1st-level Shadar sentinel can *detect chaos, detect evil, detect good, detect law,* and *detect magic* as a spell-like ability. This ability duplicates the effects of the spells of the same name. The Shadar sentinel can only activate one detection at a time.

Spell-like Divination (Sp): At 2nd level, the Shadar sentinel gains the ability to use one 1st-level Divination spell as a spell-like ability usable at will. At every tenth level after 2nd (12th, 22nd, and so on), the Shadar sentinel gains a new Divination spell-like ability of a level equal to or less than the previous spell-like ability gained +1. Thus, at 12th level, the sentinel could pick a 2nd-level Divination spell, and at 22nd level she could pick a 3rd-level Divination spell.

Shadar Insights (Su): Every 3 levels, the Shadar sentinel's continued study of the Shadar Pool and the changes it has wrought upon her body and soul uncovers a new insight into the way her powers are developing. This insight must be chosen from the following list:

+1 insight bonus to Armor Class
+4 insight bonus to any one skill
+1 insight bonus to attack rolls
+1 insight bonus to one saving throw
+4 insight bonus to maximu hit points

If the Shadar sentinel selects a bonus that she has already selected, the new bonus stacks with the old bonus. Insight bonuses gained from any other source do not stack with an insight bonus granted by a Shadar insight.

Bonus Feats: The Shadar sentinel gains a bonus feat (selected from the epic loremaster bonus feats) at 5th level and at every 10 levels after 5th (5th, 15th, 25th, and so on).

Spell-like Enchantment (Sp): At 8th level, the Shadar sentinel gains the ability to use one 1st-level Enchantment spell as a spell-like ability at will. Every 10 levels after 8th (18th, 28th, and so on), the Shadar sentinel gains a new Enchantment spell-like ability of a level equal to or less than the previous spell-like ability gained +1. Thus, at 18th level, the sentinel could pick a 2nd-level Enchantment spell, and at 28th level she could pick a 3rd-level Enchantment spell.

The Soulreaver

Although the majority of those who belong to the Shadow Shoal are nothing more than powerful, epic-level assassins, there are a select few who are chosen by the Lord of the Shadow Shoal to become his chosen killers. These purely evil masters of slaughter are contacted in their dreams by Lascer and offered the secrets of the soulreaver; those who accept the offer wake with terrible new powers, while those who do not accept wake just long enough to scream before dying of some unknowable terror. Soulreavers quickly rise to positions of power and leadership in the Shadow Shoal as they use their newfound abilities to assassinate any who might stand in their way. Once a soulreaver has established himself in a position of power, his life is rarely comfortable. Lascer does not grant the lore of the soulreaver lightly or without reason; those to whom he offers this knowledge can expect to be called upon regularly in dreams to perform tasks and slayings for the Lord of the Shadow Shoal.

Soulreavers must be proficient assassins. Lascer often looks favorably upon those who are particularly skilled

at arcane magic and at the various assassin skills. Most soulreavers are bards, rogues, sorcerers, or wizards, but monks, fighters, and rangers are not uncommon. Barbarians are generally too coarse to pique Lascer's interest, and clerics and druids are often passed over because their devotions lie elsewhere. Paladins are unable to become soulreavers, although blackguard/assassins can make particularly deadly additions to the Shadow Shoal.

Class Features

All the following are features of the soulreaver prestige class.

Sneak Attack: The soulreaver's sneak attack damage increases by +1d6 every 2 levels.

Improved Assassin Spells: Once an assassin becomes a soulreaver, he may choose to prepare improved assassin spells in any available Improved Spellcasting slots. These improved spells are treated as normal assassin spells as regards to the DC to save or the methods of preparation; all improved assassin spells are based on Intelligence and are arcane spells. These spells may be chosen from the list below:

5th Level—*ethereal jaunt, nightmare, slay living, teleport*

6th Level—*circle of death, etherealness, harm, mislead*

7th Level—*destruction, finger of death, shadow walk, teleport without error*

8th Level—*mind blank, power word kill, screen, trap the soul*

9th Level—*imprisonment, soul bind, wail of the banshee, weird*

Double Death (Ex): At 2nd level, the soulreaver may declare one death attack per day to be a double death attack. When the assassin makes the death attack, the victim must make two saving throws to survive rather than just one. Every ten levels after 2nd (at 12th, 22nd, and so on), the soulreaver can make a double death attack an additional time each day.

Bonus Feats: The soulreaver gains a bonus feat (selected from the list of epic assassin feats) every 4 levels.

Vampiric Death (Su): At 6th level, the soulreaver may declare a single death attack to be a vampiric death attack, up to once per day. If the death attack successfully slays the victim, the assassin absorbs a tiny portion of the departing soul's life energies and gains a +6 profane bonus to his Strength and Constitution and +6d6 temporary hit points for the next hour. Every ten levels after 6th (at 16th, 26th, and so on), the soulreaver may make a vampiric death attack one additional time each day. This cannot be combined with the double death ability.

Sudden Death (Ex): At 10th level, the soulreaver can draw upon the unholy energies of his imprisoned master to strike with blinding speed with a death attack. This death attack is a full-round action, but it does not require the assassin to spend 3 rounds studying his victim; the attack must still be a sneak attack, however. Every ten levels thereafter (20th, 30th, and so on), the soulreaver may make a sudden death attack an additional time each day.

EPIC-LEVEL NPCS

Presented here are Tesseril and Lascer, the leaders of the Sentinels of Shadar and the Shadow Shoal respectively. Either character makes for a potent threat to epic-level PCs.

Tesseril

Tesseril is ancient, fully 650 years old. Nevertheless, her druidic powers keep her as young, healthy, and beautiful as she was at age 150. She stands rather tall for an elf, and she carries herself with a grace that is haunting to behold. Her hair is long and coppery, and her eyes are a brilliant shade of violet. Her voice is strong and clear, and she is quick to befriend those she believes mean her or the Shadar Pool no ill will.

Tesseril keeps the true extent of her powers secret; she is loathe to use her epic spells or her most powerful abilities indiscriminately, since she knows that such awesome displays of power would arouse the curiosity of any survivors and drive them to find out how such a young-looking elf could wield such magic. She knows that the powers granted by the Shadar Pool are easily abused and also knows that those who would use such powers in moderation are few and far between. For the past several decades, she lived in a state of increasing paranoia that she would fail and that the Shadar Pool would fall into the hands of some unknown enemy. She withdrew farther from contact with others apart from her animal companions (especially the awakened sperm whale Urlkathoon), becoming more and more convinced that all of the civilized world would abuse the power of the Shadar Pool if they knew of its existence.

Yaervilar's attack on the Shadar Caves only served to prove her fears

Soulreaver Class

Requirements

To qualify to become a soulreaver, a character must fulfill all the following criteria:

Alignment: Any evil.

Disguise: 12 ranks.

Hide: 24 ranks.

Knowledge (Arcana): 12 ranks.

Move Silently: 24 ranks.

Feats: Ambidexterity, Improved Critical, Improved Spellcasting, Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Two-Weapon Fighting.

Special: The character must be able to cast 4th-level assassin spells.

Before becoming a soulreaver, the character must have been contacted by Lascer in a dream. This requires that the prospective soulreaver has already fulfilled all other feats and has successfully assassinated no less than ten targets in a single day; all of these assassinated victims must be at least CR 15. Once these prerequisites have all been met, there is a non-cumulative 1% chance each year that the prospective soulreaver is contacted by Lascer and offered the terrible secrets of the soulreaver's ways. If the prospective soulreaver is already a member of the Shadow Shoal, the chance of being contacted by Lascer rises to a 75% chance per year. If the prospective soulreaver agrees to become one of the chosen slayers of Lascer, he awakens and may take his first level of soulreaver at any point thereafter when he gains enough experience points to gain a level. If the prospective soulreaver refuses the offer or otherwise offends Lascer, he must make a Fortitude saving throw (DC 57) or be slain upon awakening.

Soulreaver
Class Skills

The soulreaver's class skills (and the key abilities for each) are:

Str: Climb, Jump, Swim.

Dex: Balance, Disable Device, Escape Artist, Hide, Move Silently, Open Lock, Pick Pocket, Tumble, Use Rope.

Con: Concentration.

Int: Alchemy, Decipher Script (exclusive skill), Craft, Forgery, Knowledge (arcana), Knowledge (the planes), Read Lips, Scry, Search.

Wis: Innuendo, Listen, Profession, Sense Motive, Spot.

Cha: Bluff, Disguise, Gather Information, Intimidate, Perform, Use Magic Device (exclusive skill).

Skill Points at Each Level: 6 + Int modifier.

Soulreaver
Advancement

HIT DIE D6

Levels	Special
1st	Sneak attack +1d6, improved assassin spells
2nd	Double death 1/day
3rd	Sneak attack +2d6
4th	Bonus feat
5th	Sneak attack +3d6
6th	Vampiric death
7th	Sneak attack +4d6
8th	Bonus feat
9th	Sneak attack +5d6
10th	Sudden death 1/day

and drove her over the edge. She threw all caution to the wind and defended the pool with a ferocity of such magnitude that, although she managed to slay the assassin wizard, she destroyed herself in the process. If she is restored to life via *resurrection* or similar magic, she recovers from her madness to a certain extent, mollified by the knowledge that at least a few in the world count her as an ally or possibly even a friend. But no matter how many allies she gains in the coming years, or no matter how strong the Sentinels grow again, her eyes and face will forevermore be haunted by a shadow of doubt, fear, and paranoia.

Tesseril, Elf Female Drd34/Shadar sentinel 6: CR 40; Medium-size Humanoid (elf) (5' 3" tall); HD 40d8+320; hp 500; Init +9 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 45 (+8 *+5 etherealness leather armor*, +7 *+5 heavy fortified large wooden shield*, +5 deflection, +9 Dex, +5 natural, +1 insight) (touch 25, flat-footed 36); Atk +37/+32/+27 melee (1d6+12, *+5 defending bane vs. aberrations shocking burst scimitar*); SA spell use, wild shape; SQ *aurasight*, nature sense, woodland stride, trackless step, resist nature's lure, venom immunity, a thousand faces, timeless body, sudden insight 2/day, *true strike* (spell-like ability usable at will) Shadar insight (+2 insight bonus to Spellcraft), Shadar insight (+1 insight bonus to AC); AL NG; SV Fort +30, Ref +25, Will +38; Str 25, Dex 28, Con 26, Int 26, Wis 39, Cha 24.

Skills and Feats: Animal Empathy +36, Concentration +20, Craft (sculpture) +36, Diplomacy +15, Knowledge (history) +36, Knowledge (nature) +51, Scry +33, Spellcraft +53, Wilderness Lore +43; Alertness, Automatic Quickened Spell, Beast Wild Shape, Dodge, Epic Skill Focus (Knowledge [history]), Epic Spellcasting, Epic Spell Focus (Evocation), Gargantuan Wild Shape, Improved Spellcasting (x4), Iron Will, Magical Beast Wild Shape, Maximize Spell, Natural Spell*, Quicken Spell, Spell Focus (Evocation).

*This feat appears in *Masters of the Wild;* it allows the druid to cast spells with verbal and somatic components while wild shaped.

Spells Prepared: (6/9/9/8/8/8/7/6/6/6/3/2/2/2; Base DC = 24 + spell level, or 30 + spell level for Evocation spells, spells marked with an asterisk are Evocation spells): 0—*create water, detect magic* x2, *flare*, light, read magic;* 1st—*cure light wounds* x3, *endure elements, entangle* x2, *faerie fire*, obscuring mist* x2; 2nd—*charm person or animal, fire trap, flame blade*, flaming sphere*, produce flame*, resist elements, speak with animals, summon swarm, tree shape;* 3rd—*call lightning*, cure moderate wounds* x2, *greater magic fang* x2, *protection from elements, poison, speak with plants;* 4th—*control plants, cure serious wounds* x2, *dispel magic, flame strike*, rusting grasp, scrying, spike stones;* 5th—*animal growth, cure critical wounds* x2, *death ward, flame blade** (maximized), *insect plague, transmute rock to mud, wall of thorns;* 6th—*call lightning** (maximized), *fire seeds, greater dispelling* x2, *poison* (maximized), *repel wood, transport via plants;* 7th—*creeping doom, firestorm*, flame strike** (maximized), *greater scrying, heal, sunbeam*;* 8th—*cure serious wounds* (quickened), *finger of death, flame strike** (quickened), *summon nature's ally VIII, sunburst*, whirlwind*;* 9th—*cure critical wounds* (quickened), *earthquake, foresight, shambler, summon nature's ally IX, wall of fire* (quickened); 10th—*fire storm** (maximized), *greater dispelling* (quickened), *wall of stone* (quickened); 11th—*flame strike** (maximized, quickened), *heal* (quickened); 12th—*finger of death* (quickened), *word of recall* (quickened); 13th—*earthquake* (quickened)*, *shapechange* (quickened).

SA—Wildshape: Tesseril may wildshape 10 times a day (11 when she wears her *druid vestments*). She may assume the form of any animal, beast, or magical beast of size Tiny to Gargantuan. She may also assume the form of an elemental of Tiny through Gargantuan size 3 times a day.

Epic Spells per Day: 4; DC 34 (40 for Evocation).

Epic Spells Known: *Crown of vermin, nailed to the sky, nimbus, spell worm, superb dispelling.*

Equipment: *+5 defending bane vs. abberations shocking burst scimitar,* quarterstaff enchanted with *changestaff* and *spellstaff* (contains a quickened *finger of death*), *+5 etherealness leather armor, +5 heavy fortified large wooden shield, ring of protection +5* (doesn't count against total limit of rings worn), *ring of water elemental command, ring of spell storing* (contains a maximized *fire storm*), *cloak of charisma +6, belt of wild giant strength +6* (user keeps the bonus even when in other forms), *scabbard of keen edges, boots of swiftness, periapt of wild wisdom +6* (user keeps the bonus even when in other forms), *amulet of natural armor +5, necklace of prayer beads* (*wind walking, karma, and smiting*), *Heward's handy haversack, headband of intellect +6,* 3 *incenses of meditation, druid's vestment, bracers of wild health +6* (user keeps the bonus even when in other forms), 3 doses of *stone salve,* 4 *potions of cure serious wounds,* 2 *potions of heroism.*

Lascer

The gods believe that they have removed the Lost Scion from reality by casting his soulless body into the Astral Plane, but they erred. A tiny spark of the Lost Scion's will remained, trapped in his eternally rotting carcass for thousands of years. As the ages wore on, this spark began to rebuild its power and

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SO, NO KIDDING, THERE I AM, ARMED WITH NOTHING BUT A SPORK, AND COMING RIGHT AT ME ARE FIVE THOUSAND BERSERKER GERBILS! NATURALLY
HALL of GAMING
This is great! The Hall Never closes! I can game for Ninety-Six Hours STRAIGHT!
...This is Different from your NORMAL Life HOW?
I LET THE GRAND VIZIER REACH INTO MY BAG OF HOLDING AND HE PULLS OUT ONE VERY ANNOYED RED DRAGON, WHO CALMLY SAYS
I Think my seminar on 'How To Be Invisible' was a Big Success!
YES!
WHAT?! I didn't see ANYBODY in the audience.
FLATTEN THE EARTH SOCIETY
"ANY DEITY THAT STUPID DESERVES TO HAVE HIS ALTAR DESECRATED." THAT'S WHEN THE OLD MAN STARTS TO GLOW, AND THE REST OF US RUN SCREAMING
CELEBRITY GUESTS
WARWICK DAVIS
JONATHAN FRAKES
TED RAIMI
BECAUSE THE SPELL DISINTEGRATED ALL OF THE QUEEN'S CLOTHING, AND EVERYONE SEES HER
COMPUTER GAMING
NEVER EVER PULL THIS PLUG
Heh Heh! I've Hacked This program so MY die roll is ALWAYS The highest!
um...actually you now have every winning bid on E-BAY.
FOGLIO-'02
RATS. GREAT HEAPS OF DEAD RATS. THE OGRE KING BELLOWS, "EAT UP! IS THERE SOMETHING WRONG WITH MY HOSPITALITY?" ALL THE OGRES ARE LOOKING AT ME, SO I REACH OUT
EXHIBIT HALL
What a GREAT Exhibit Hall! It had Everything I ever wanted in Life!
Yeah, I bought some Dice, too.

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eventually made a feeble attempt to escape its dead shell. The attempt failed, but the surge of power generated attracted the attention of a powerful erinyes wizard by the name of Kastilla, an exile herself for attempting a coup against her infernal overlords. The powerful devil could tell that the surge of power could be a great boon if she could harness it. Unfortunately, she underestimated its power, and she was quickly overwhelmed by its strength. The fragment of the Lost Scion's will was without soul or body, but it managed still to infest Kastilla's body like a parasite, and over the course of a few excruciating minutes grew to maturity inside her body and burst forth fully formed. Thus was the abomination Lascer born into the silvery waste of the Astral Plane.

Lascer quickly found that he wielded great power. Nevertheless, he was still somewhat bound by the ancient edict of the gods; the exile of the Lost Scion carried over to Lascer and prevented him from fully manifesting his body anywhere but the Astral Plane. At first, Lascer was infuriated at this, but eventually he learned that while he could not leave the Astral Plane, he could spy upon an infinite number of other planes and worlds connected to his silvery prison. As time wore on, Lascer found that he could extend his will from the Astral Plane into the Region of Dreams, from whence he could influence the minds of those who were particularly open to his offers of power and knowledge. He used this power to search for a way to escape the Astral Plane and return to reality, and after several centuries of research he finally came upon a possibility. According to his research, if a number of ritualistic slayings or assassinations were performed in his name, the dead could be made to remember the fate of the Lost Scion and their combined fear and despair could be used to punch a hole in the Astral Plane and unleash him back into reality.

Fortunately, Lascer's theory remains just that at this point. He feels that he is nearing his goal, and that each new victim claimed by the Shadow Shoal might be the one to finally set him free.

Lascer appears as a looming, gaunt humanoid figure. His skin is sallow and looks like aged parchment, and it is stretched tightly over his bony frame; despite this appearance, Lascer is unbelievably strong. His arms and legs are much longer than they have any right to be, and both end in razor-sharp talons. His face is the stuff of pure terror. Bulging orange eyes that glow with an inner fire, a grossly oversized mouth filled with stiletto-like teeth, and large bat-like ears complete his terrible appearance. Lascer is completely hairless. A pair of nearly skeletal wings covered with strips of tattered, dead flesh protrude from his back; these wings are covered with razor-sharp spines and blades and, despite their appearance, somehow still allow the Lord of the Shadow Shoal to fly about with incredible speed and agility.

Lascer, Lord of the Shadow Shoal, Paragon Infernal Male Asn 5/Soulreaver 15: CR 58; Large Outsider (15' 10" tall); HD 40d8+20d6+1,680; hp 2,120; Init +17 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 240 ft., fly 720 ft. (perfect); AC 92 (+13 Dex, -1 size, +20 insight, +12 luck, +38 natural); Atk +105/+100/+95/+90 melee (1d6+54/crit 12-20, *+10 keen unholy power rapiers*) and +105/+100/+95/+90 melee (1d6+42/crit 12-20, *+10 keen unholy power rapiers*), or +98 melee (4d6+44, 2 claws), +93 melee (4d8+32 + spell suck, bite), and +93 melee (2d6+32, 2 wings); SA improved grab, spell suck, spell-like abilities, summon pit fiend, sneak attack +10d6, double death 2/day, vampiric death 1/day, sudden death 1/day; SQ improved assassin spells, abomination qualities, learned spell immunity, fast healing 20, regeneration 15, SR 68, damage reduction 35/+7, +10 bonus to saving throws against poison; AL LE; Saves Fort +58, Ref +55, Will +57; Str 58, Dex 36, Con 43, Int 37, Wis 41, Cha 44.

Skills and Feats: Alchemy +44, Balance +86, Bluff +60, Concentration +69, Diplomacy +90, Disguise +68, Escape Artist +86, Hide +82, Jump +77, Intimidate +48, Intuit Direction +45, Knowledge (arcana) +86, Knowledge (planes) +66, Listen +90, Move Silently +86, Scry +66, Search +96, Sense Motive +98, Spellcraft +86, Spot +90, Swim +55, Tumble +86; Alertness, Ambidexterity, Blinding Speed x2, Cleave, Epic Spellcasting, Greater Two-Weapon Fighting, Improved Critical (rapier), Improved Death Attack, Improved Initiative, Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Improved Spellcasting x5, Perfect Two-Weapon Fighting, Power Attack, Tenacious Spell (*blur*), Tenacious Spell (*improved invisibility*), Two-Weapon Fighting, Two-Weapon Rend, Weapon Focus (rapier).

SA—Improved Grab: If Lascer hits with a claw, he deals normal damage and attempts to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. Lascer's grapple check is +91, and he may use this ability on size Large and smaller creatures. He has the option to conduct the grapple normally or simply use his claw to hold the opponent (this incurs a -20 penalty to his grapple check). Each successful grapple check he makes during successive rounds automatically deals claw damage and automatic spell suck damage.

Assassin Spells Prepared: (6/5/5/4/4/3/3/3; Base DC = 23 + spell level): 1st—*change self* x2, *ghost sound, obscuring mist, spider climb* x2; 2nd—*alter self, darkness* x2, *pass without trace, undetectable alignment;* 3rd—*deeper darkness* x2, *misdirection* x2, *nondetection;* 4th—*freedom of movement, poison* x3; 5th—*ethereal jaunt, nightmare, slay living* x2; 6th—*circle of death, harm* x2; 7th—*destruction, finger of death* x2; 8th—*power word kill* x2, *screen;* 9th—*imprisonment, wail of the banshee, weird.*

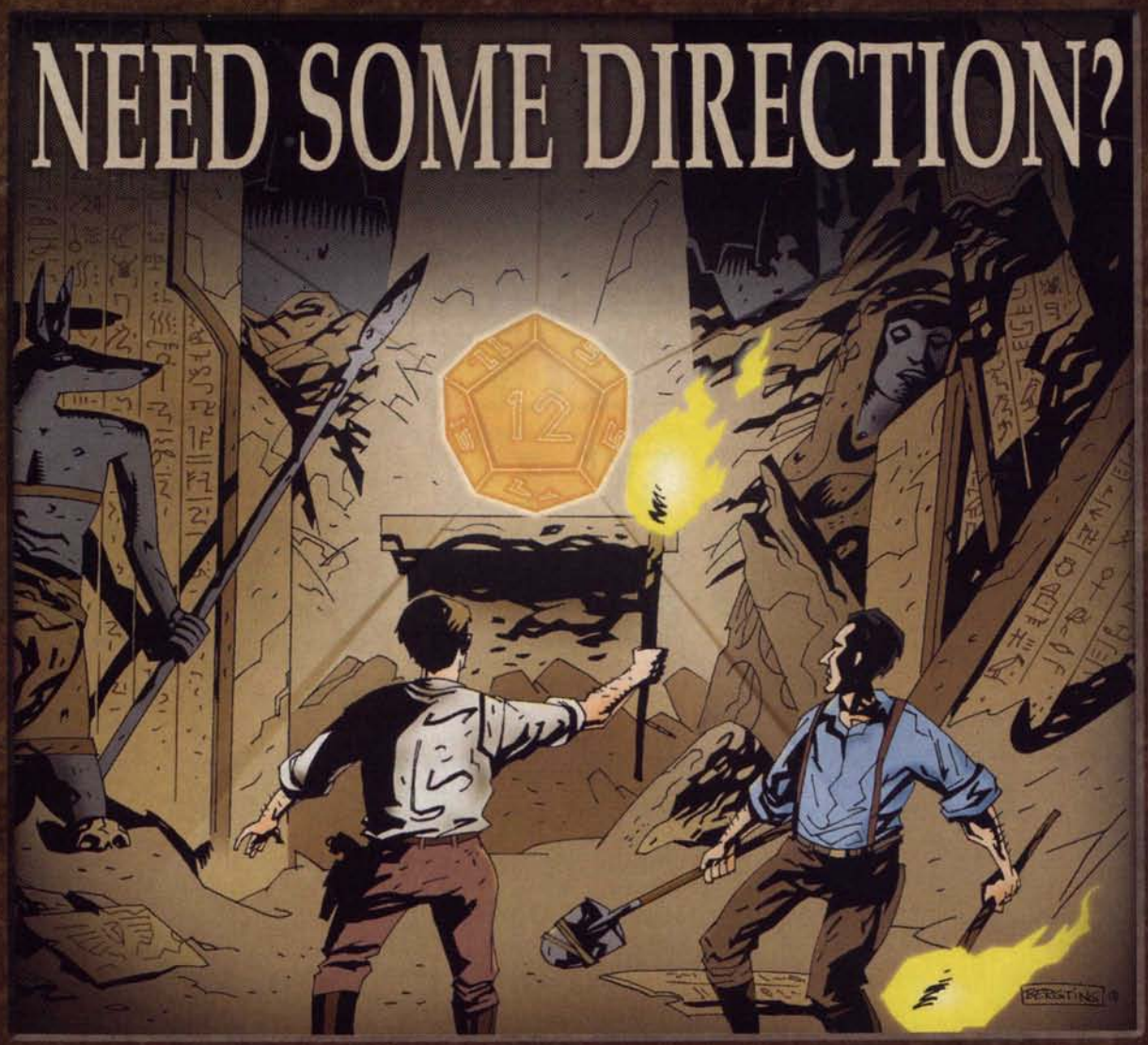
Epic Spells Per Day: 6; DC 33.

Epic Spells Known: *Damnation, dreamscape, enslave, greater ruin, lord of nightmares, oath of binding, ruin, superb dispelling, time duplicate.*

Spell-Like Abilities: At will as a 41st level sorcerer (save DC 40 + spell level)—*animate dead, blasphemy, blur, charm person, create undead, darkness, deeper darkness, desecrate, detect chaos, detect good, detect law, detect magic, fear, fireball, greater dispelling, hold person, improved invisibility, magic circle against good, major image, produce flame, polymorph self, pyrotechnics, read magic, scrying, suggestion, symbol* (any), *telekinesis, teleport without error* (self plus 1000 pounds), *unholy aura, unholy blight, unhallow, wall of fire;* 3/day—*haste, see invisibility;* 1/day—*firestorm, hellball, implosion, meteor swarm.*

Equipment: Two *+10 keen unholy power rapiers.* These two potent swords constitute the entirety of Lascer's possessions; forged at the time of his birth from the shards of the Last Scion's will. These swords appear to be made of bone and petrified flesh, and constantly emit a putrid breeze as if the air itself were rotting on contact. D

NEED SOME DIRECTION?



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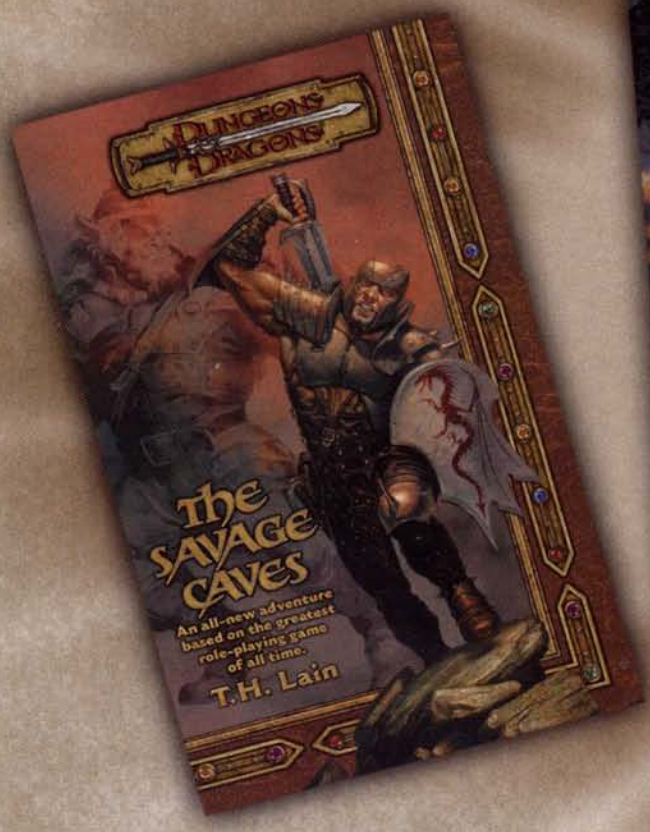

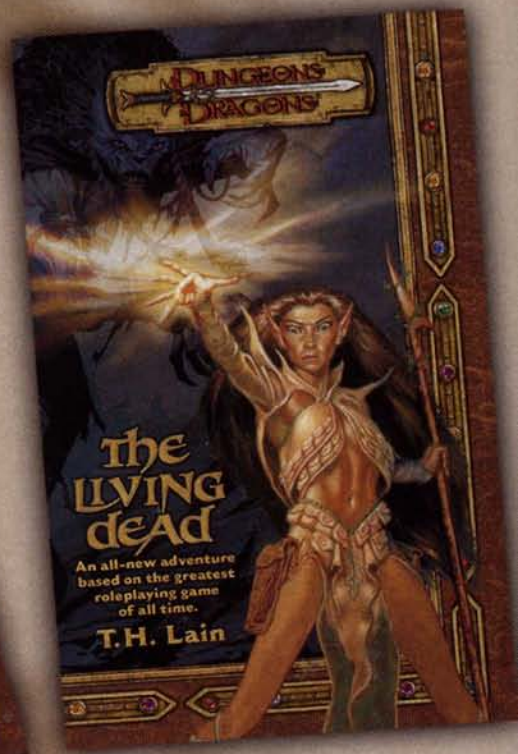

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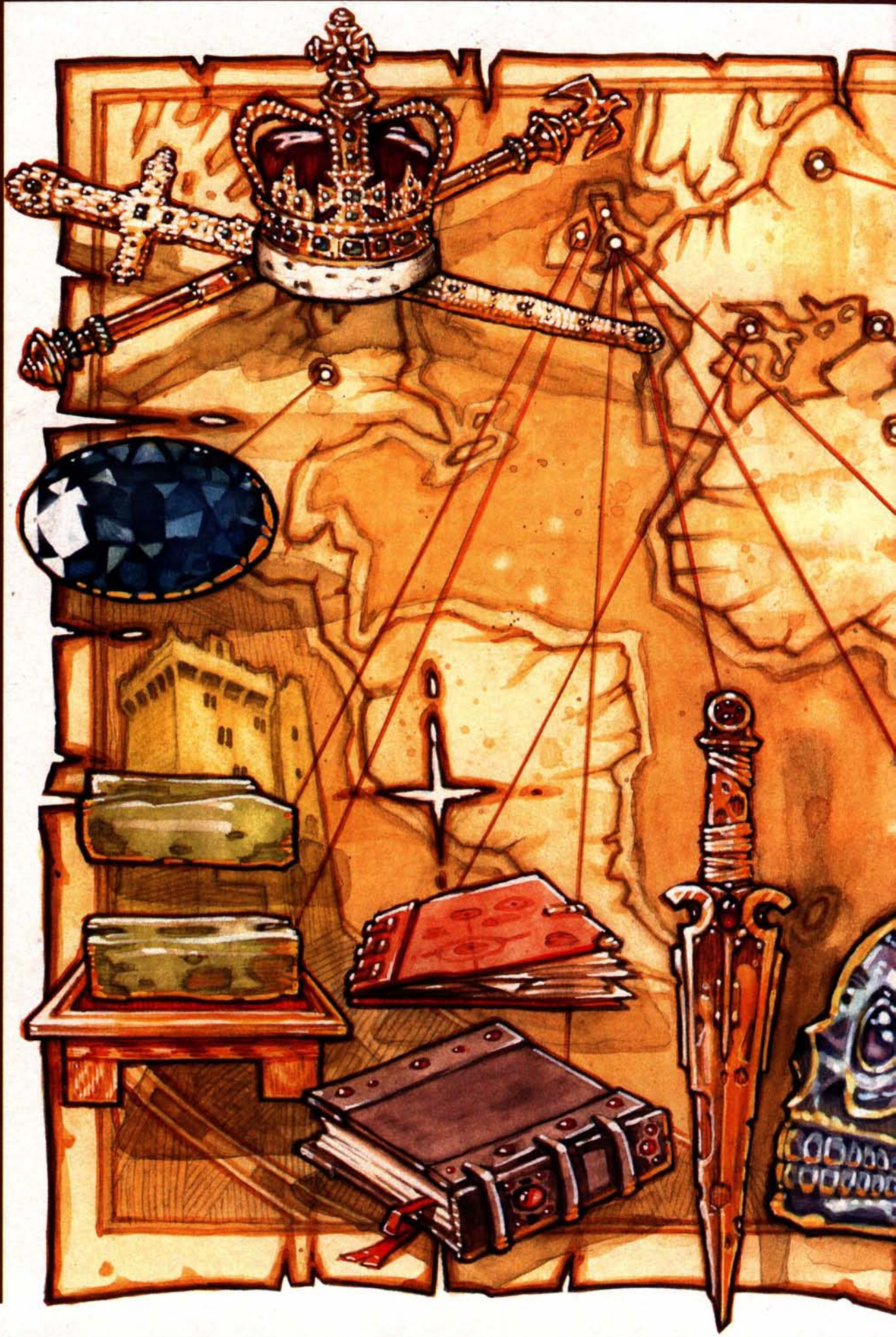

REAL WORLD

by Mike Selinker · illustrated by Chuck Lukacs

Giants have walked this earth. We know their names as assuredly as our own: Julius Caesar, da Vinci, Elizabeth I, Ptolemy, Shakespeare. Their works and actions are the stuff of fable, yet all are undeniably real. They are proof that the greatest epics come not from our pens and tablets, but from our deeds.

If our world were as magical as those of D&D, the giants who walked the earth would have possessed the greatest items of power the world had ever seen. This article glimpses at what the fantastical versions of those legends would have held at their sides. All these items are inspired by real relics or linked to real people. In many cases, you can go see these items in museums, mausoleums, and out in the open air. Your world awaits.

These items use rules from the *Epic-Level Handbook*. Where needed, rules are explained here. The items are vastly more expensive than those in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* but are not artifacts. The items (or versions that suit your campaign) can be crafted by epic spellcasters with a surplus of expendable time and experience points. Be careful how you use them, though. These are not trifles, not even for those beyond 20th level. They are the treasures of kings and paragons, and your characters must prove that they merit them.

The Codex Hammer

"We may say that the Earth has a spirit of growth, and that its flesh is the soil."

—Leonardo da Vinci, in the *Codex Hammer*

We know today that the earth's interior is in constant motion. But da Vinci knew it before anyone, said it better than anyone, and even illustrated it better than anyone. Da Vinci was the man in the term "Renaissance man," even if those in the Renaissance didn't appreciate it. Though to him they were merely musings and dreams, every sentence he wrote seems like genius today. You can get a glimpse inside da Vinci's mind in one of his notebooks, the *Codex Hammer*. With its visions of

If You Don't Have the Epic Level Handbook

If you don't have the *Epic Level Handbook*, you can still get a lot of use out of this article. Since the item's powers are described, you can simply remove the costs and make them major artifacts.

Like other artifacts and items of great power, they should be introduced to your game very carefully, and recovering one of these items or destroying it to keep it out of evil hands could form the culminating adventure of many campaigns.

For more ideas on how to bring these items into your campaign, see the For Your Campaign sidebar later in the article.

helicopters, lunar craters, hydrodynamics, submarines, and evolution, the *Codex Hammer* sounds the clarion to those searching for prophecy in the legerdemain of Nostradamus. Look no further, the clarion calls, for prophecy is here.

The History, or So It Goes: Self-taught and unfettered by the church, Leonardo da Vinci scarcely found a field he couldn't revolutionize. Sculpture, music, architecture, painting, mathematics, and engineering all metamorphosed at his touch, but the man who gave us the Mona Lisa saved a special love for science. In 31 notebooks, he outlined his visions for the future, ones that manufacturing and research of the time could not realize.

The *Codex Hammer* is such a notebook. On 18 double-sided sheets of linen paper, da Vinci wrote and illustrated his theories in sepia—and to leave no question of his virtuosity, he wrote it all backward. His strange reverse Italian might have been more comfortable, or it might just have been his playful side hard at work. Whatever his reasons, his conclusions were not heard by his contemporaries, for da Vinci wrote for none but himself.

He bequeathed his notebooks to his pupil, Francesco Melzi. The books soon scattered from one noted genius to another: sculptors, painters, historians. The codex mentioned here passed to Thomas Coke, the Earl of Leicester. His family held what it dubbed the *Codex Leicester* for more than two centuries. It changed name again when industrialist Armand Hammer named it the *Codex Hammer*, a name resounding with potency and bravado.

After Hammer's death in 1994, Microsoft chairman Bill Gates bought the work for $30.8 million and again renamed it—although he simply restored the name *Codex Leicester*. After an international museum tour, it resides in darkness in a vault in Gates's Seattle mansion.

Epic Powers: Reading any of the 31 notebooks requires at least an 18 Intelligence, for the backward text and rapid-fire conclusions can daunt even the sharpest reader. Each is geared to a certain skill. Reading one of the notebooks requires a total of 84 hours over a minimum of seven days, after which the reader may make an Intelligence check (DC 30), with a bonus of +1 per rank in the skill that the notebook affects. If the check is successful, the reader permanently gains the Epic Skill Focus feat for that skill (+10 on skill checks) regardless of prerequisites. The notebooks help inherent understanding; if the reader uses any magical method of raising skill ranks (including temporary Intelligence boosts), the Intelligence check automatically fails. The reader may invest as many weeks as she desires, gaining a check at the end of each week during which 84 hours were invested.

Each notebook has a related Knowledge skill. To determine which notebook has been found, roll on this table:

d%	Subject
01-03	Alchemy
04-07	Craft (armorsmithing)
08-10	Craft (blacksmithing)
11-12	Craft (bookbinding)
13-15	Craft (bowmaking)
16-19	Craft (calligraphy)
20-21	Craft (carpentry)
22-23	Craft (gemcutting)
24-25	Craft (leatherworking)
26-27	Craft (locksmithing)
28-31	Craft (painting)
32-34	Craft (pottery)
35-39	Craft (sculpting)
40-42	Craft (shipmaking)
43-44	Craft (stonemasonry)
45-48	Craft (weaponsmithing)
49-51	Decipher Script
52-54	Disable Device
55-58	Knowledge (arcana)
59-62	Knowledge (architecture and engineering)
63-65	Knowledge (geography)
66-68	Knowledge (history)
69-72	Knowledge (nature)
73-76	Knowledge (the planes)
77-78	Knowledge (religion)
79-82	Perform
83-86	Profession (herbalist)
87-90	Profession (siege engineer)
91-93	Spellcraft
94-96	Use Magic Device
97-00	Wilderness Lore

The DM may choose different subjects appropriate to his campaign; in a modern game, for example, bowmaking might become gunsmithing.

Caster Level: 21st; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, Craft Epic Wondrous Item, Epic Skill Focus (desired skill), *legend lore;* **Market Price:** 327,000 gp; **Cost to Create:** 126,000 gp + 25,080 XP; **Weight:** 3 lbs.

Crocea Mors

"The sword was named Yellow Death because none could evade it and it was invulnerable."

—historian Geoffrey of Monmouth

The classical nobles named the weapons at their belts. Just as Zeus had his shield Aegis, so did Marc Antony name his sword Philippan. But one such weapon slashed an arc through history wider than any other. Before he crossed the Rubicon to became emperor, Julius Caesar wielded *Crocea Mors* ("Yellow Death"). This golden sword shone in the sun, and all who felt its sting died from its wounds. The sword proved fickle, and may do so again.

The History, or So It Goes: As the Roman dominion expanded, Caius Julius Caesar cut through Gaul with the thunderous blade of *Crocea Mors*. According to legend, Vulcan forged *Crocea Mors* to be wielded by Mars, Aeneas, Hercules, and Alexander. After purportedly rediscovering the sword, Caesar separated many men from their heads and left the rest with mortal wounds. It seemed the Roman war machine could not be halted.

Now Caesar faced his greatest test. He looked across the English channel and deemed the Britons kinsmen of a degenerate sort. Caesar demanded tribute, and Cassibellaun, king of the Britons, stood fast against the imposition. As the battle raged, Cassibellaun's

brother, Nennius of Canterbury, fell upon Caesar's troops. Nennius strode to face the man who would be King of the World. Caesar bore down upon the Briton's shield with all the force in the land. Though Nennius reeled from the blow, the golden sword glanced from his shield and lodged in his helmet. Caesar retreated without his precious blade.

Nennius discarded his own sword and attacked the Romans with their leader's gleaming weapon. Now the Romans saw the power of *Crocea Mors,* as Nennius cleft heads from shoulders and left others without hope of recovery. The Britons drove the Romans to the sea, but Nennius would not see the Romans' return. For at Caesar's hand, *Crocea Mors* had cut him so deep that fifteen days after the battle, he died from his wounds. Cassibellaun buried his brother at Trinovantum, with *Crocea Mors* entombed on his chest.

To some, the story of *Crocea Mors* ends there, but a few scholars say that 500 years later, the sword was unearthed in a Silchester churchyard, where many tried to free it from a stone. A frustrated engraver etched above its hilt the legend "ex calceliberace," or "much treasure to free from stone of iron." To universal surprise, a young Arthur pulled the sword from the stone and, so armed with Excalibur, united Britain. This connection is the subject of much debate, but *Crocea Mors,* whatever its history, deserves its place before all other blades.

Epic Powers: *Crocea Mors* is a *+6 vorpal keen wounding short sword of lawful power.* Anyone damaged by the sword must make a Fortitude save (DC 25) or suffer filth fever from an intensified (variable effects maximized, then doubled, as the Intensify Spell epic feat) *contagion* spell with a 1-day incubation period. The lawful power ability deals +3d6 points of bonus lawful damage and 1 negative level to a chaotic target. The negative level requires a DC 23 Fortitude saving throw to remove 24 hours later. On a critical hit, the lawful power ability inflicts +6d6 points of lawful damage and 2 negative levels. The sword bestows 3 negative levels to a chaotic wielder.

Crocea Mors is made of gold, but it has the strength of *+6 adamantine* (Hardness 26). When exposed to direct sunlight or within the radius of a *daylight* spell, the sword emanates light that causes anyone within 5 feet except the wielder to make a Fortitude save (DC 22) or become blinded until the sword is more than 5 feet away for at least 1 round.

This sword is a lawful neutral, empathic weapon with Intelligence 25, Wisdom 14, Charisma 30, and Ego 69. It can use the Sense Motive skill at +12. When used, the sword grants its wielder the Combat Reflexes, Great Cleave, and Sunder feats. It can cast *stoneskin* for 10 minutes twice per day, an enlarged (as the metamagic feat Enlarge Spell) *magic circle against chaos* for 1 hour once per day, and *haste* for 10 rounds once per day, all centered on the wielder while in combat.

Crocea Mors exists to unify lands under the wielder. In pursuit of its goal, it casts an intensified (as the Intensify Spell epic feat) *bull's strength* (+10 bonus) on the wielder for 17 hours once per day. The sword cannot abide weakness, or even strategic retreat. It keeps a tally of how often the wielder retreats from or surrenders in combat. During or after each retreat, there is a percentage chance equal to 10 times the number of retreats that *Crocea Mors* will stick itself fast to an object, requiring a Strength check (DC = Ego) to free it. In this state, *Crocea Mors* doesn't consider itself wielded, so any spells it has cast on the wielder end.

Caster Level: 33rd; **Prerequisites:** Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Craft Epic Magic Arms and Armor, Intensify Spell, *blindness/deafness, contagion, order's wrath,* creator must be lawful; **Market Price:** 18,259,910 gp; Cost to Create: 9,130,610 gp + 730,344 XP.

The Crystal Skulls of Doom

"It has been described as the embodiment of all evil."

—archaeologist Frederick Mitchell-Hedges

London's British Museum holds six crystal skulls so lifelike that night cleaning crews refuse to work when the display is uncovered. In the most perfect of those skulls, they say, the future can be seen deep in its eye-sockets, but staring too long can lead to madness. Others claim that the skulls can project searing beams of light, can alter moods and thoughts, and even cause death. Who made it? Whose skull is it? These questions still resonate, and the skull is silent.

The History, or So It Goes: In 1898, the British Museum put on display a crystal skull of "possibly Aztec origin"—though with no way to date crystal, none could say for sure. The skull became the Museum's most popular attraction, as visitors came from afar to gaze in its eyes. The skull was crude, with mere indications of teeth carved by a bow-and-string mechanism. These clues to the skull's origin, and of five more found later, are all we have.

That said, the world was not prepared for what 17-year-old Anna Mitchell-Hedges found in 1924. Excavating temple ruins of the Central American lost city of Lubaantum with her father, Frederick Mitchell-Hedges, she unearthed a crystal skull so anatomically perfect that it could be a real human skull transformed to crystal. (So perfect, of course, that skeptics quickly denounced it as a fraud.) Weighing 11 pounds and cut from one piece of quartz, the skull bore no markings of tools, meaning that if created by hand, it would have taken 150 to 300 years of constant work. This "Mayan skull" would have been far beyond the capabilities of those from the High Mayan period of around 800 A.D.

For Your Character

It's far easier for a DM to bring these items into a campaign than for a player to make these items directly available for a single character. However, there are several ways these items can influence a character.

Family Incident: Somehow, the character's family is connected to the item. Whether an ancestor created the powerful relic or even if the family has lived near the relic's last known resting place, the character's actions can be shaped by his family's connection to the powerful object.

National Treasure: Much like the family-based link above, this option links the character's nation with the relic in a significant, long-term way.

Obsession: Relics of this level of power can cause strange and unusual side effects. Perhaps the character's dreams are affected by proximity to one of these artifacts, leading her to obsess about the relic and seek it at nearly any cost.

But it gets weirder. A Hewlett-Packard crystallographer concluded, after six years of study, that the skull could be 12,000 years old, predating civilization itself. In his study, he saw visions of coffins and faces reflected in the skull and heard sounds of bells and cats. Others confirmed these sensations, though none could be recorded. The skull made people thirsty and produced a tugging in viewers' eyesockets. Resting in its felt-lined case in Kitchener, Ontario, it remains among the strangest objects on the planet today.

Epic Powers: A lesser "Aztec" *crystal skull of doom* is a *crystal ball* with *detect thoughts, see invisibility, telepathy,* and *true seeing* (see the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for details). Detecting any scrying from the skull requires a DC 25 Scry check. The unmagicked skull itself is worth 30,000 gp. This is a nonepic magic item.

The greater "Mayan" *crystal skull of doom* has all the lesser skull's powers, plus many more. With a DC 25 Scry check, the user can gain a *divination* (either visual or spoken through the skull's mouth) once a day. Once per hour, the holder may speak a word to blast a *sunbeam* spell as cast by a 15th-level caster through the skull's mouth, though only outside during the day or within the radius of a *daylight* spell.

Unfortunately, the greater skull also shows a *symbol* to its user whenever used to scry. The carefully inscribed *symbol* is attuned to the user(s), so others cannot be affected. The *symbol* cannot be counterspelled or dispelled. When the skull is activated for scrying, the user must make the appropriate save (DC 26) or be affected by a *symbol* from this table:

d%	*Symbol*
01-12	discord (Will save)
13-25	fear (Will save)
26-37	hopelessness (Will save)
38-50	insanity (Will save, no hit point maximum)
51-62	pain (Fortitude save)
63-75	persuasion (Will save, neutral evil)
76-87	sleep (Will save)
88-99	stunning (Fortitude save, no hit point maximum)
00	death (Fortitude save, no hit point maximum)

Though not intelligent, the *greater crystal skull of doom* also tends to gibber. Each minute, it has a 5 percent chance to cast *ventriloquism*, producing faint, random sounds. This aspect cannot be controlled.

Caster Level: 11th (lesser), 23rd (greater); **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, *detect thoughts, scrying, see invisibility, suggestion, true seeing* (lesser), plus Craft Epic Wondrous Item, *sunbeam, symbol, vision* (greater); **Market Price:** 155,000 gp (lesser), 1,227,000 gp (greater); **Cost to Create:** 92,500 gp + 2,920 XP (lesser), 806,500 gp + 27,680 XP (greater); **Weight:** 11 lbs.

The English Regalia

"Melt down all the gold and silver, and sell the jewels to the best advantage of the Commonwealth."

—Lord-Protector Oliver Cromwell

The Tower of London held the lowest of the low, and the highest of the high. In its prisons were the darkest of criminals, nobles who had everything man could desire yet schemed for more. Their reformation was unlikely, however, as above their heads—heads that could have been removed at a royal whim—were the things they most craved. The world's richest treasure, the Regalia of the British Crown Jewels, is in that very tower, and they were powerless to gain it.

The History, or So It Goes: Edward the Confessor, King of the Saxons, sat on the throne of what would become the greatest empire in modern history. Imagining his descendants would rule forever, Edward deemed that a monarch should be attended like a monarch. A crown would be constructed of the finest jewels, a staff of the finest timbers, and a sword of the most tempered steel. This was the Regalia of a king.

Sadly for these visions, the Saxon rule of Britain would end immediately after Edward died in 1066. William the Conquerer earned his appellation with a victory at Hastings over Edward's son Harold. It was out with the old, in with the Angles. William quickly snatched up Edward's treasures as his own Regalia. At the side of the English monarch they would remain for hundreds of years.

With the beheading of Charles I in 1649, Oliver Cromwell nearly destroyed England's monarchy forever. As the Roundheads ascended, Cromwell decreed that as England needed no monarch, it needed no symbols of monarchy. The Regalia of eight Henrys, six post-Confessor Edwards, three Richards, and one Elizabeth was shattered. Its metals were melted for coin, its stones were hocked, and its historical ramifications were cast aside.

Six decades after becoming a Commonwealth, the House of Stuart was restored. With it came the expensive task of recommissioning every piece of the Regalia, plus a few more for good measure. It is the Regalia on display in the Tower of London today.

Epic Powers: The major recommissioned items of Regalia, all richly crafted:

St. Edward's Crown isn't actually the Confessor's, since Cromwell melted that one. In use since the 1661 restoration of the monarchy, this gem-studded crown is the truest symbol of the British royalty's constitutional authority. It functions as a *headband of epic intellect +12* and a *cloak of epic Charisma +12.*

The Orb tops a golden globe with a bejeweled cross, symbolizing the Christian sovereign's power. It is a *periapt of epic Wisdom +12.*

The Scepter of the Cross, bearing the world's largest cut diamond, symbolizes the monarch's temporal power under the Cross. It is a *rod of epic rulership*,* allowing the wielder to command obedience.

The Scepter of the Dove denotes the ruler's equity and mercy. It is a *rod of fortification*,* allowing the creation of food, water, walls, and catapults.

St. Edward's Staff, a beaten gold shepherd's staff, honors the pastoral side of the realm. It is a *staff of the heirophants*,* enabling spells like *command plants* and *elemental swarm.*

The Armillas are golden bracelets that are ancient symbols of royalty. They function as *bracers of epic health +12.*

The Spurs are golden spurs symbolizing leadership in war. Occupying the boots "slot," they function as *bracers of epic armor +12.*

The Spoon and The Ampulla (a golden eagle flask of oil) are used in anointing the ruler. When together on a user's person, they function as a *mantle of epic spell resistance (SR 40).*

Along with only the spoon, the swords in the Regalia survived Lord Cromwell's order of destruction. The *Sword of Offering* transfers the power of the land to the monarch; it is a *+7 humandread*

*longsword**, allowing the weight of the realm to be brought against a subject. The *Sword of Temporal Justice* is a *+7 longsword of lawful power**, dealing terrifying damage against chaotic creatures. Similarly, *The Sword of Spiritual Justice* is a *holy devastator**, which can mete out pain to evil creatures in the hands of a paladin.

The final bejeweled sword, named *Curtana*, is *The Sword of Mercy*. It is a *+7 longsword* with the great reflection (automatic spell turning) ability of epic shields. The blade is permanently blunted to be a bludgeoning weapon, and it can only deal subdual damage except against undead, which suffer normal damage. At will, the wielder can use a command word to cast *atonement* as a 23rd-level cleric, though never upon himself.

Curtana's Caster Level: 23rd; **Prerequisites:** Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Craft Epic Magic Arms and Armor, *atonement, spell turning;* **Market Price:** 6,247,315 gp; **Cost to Create:** 3,3003,815 gp + 281,480 XP.

*See the *Epic Level Handbook* for details.

The First Folio

"You have a nimble wit; I think it was made of Atalanta's heels."

—Jaques, in *As You Like It*

Many icons in popular culture can be traced back to William Shakespeare's *First Folio*. In *Batman*, you see *Hamlet*. In *The Godfather*, *Macbeth*. In *Seinfeld*, *A Comedy of Errors*. In Bruce Springsteen's anguished plaints, *Romeo & Juliet*. Even in the trash talk of daytime TV, you see the breads and circuses of *Titus Andronicus*. You see these things because pop culture tries to know what you want, and Shakespeare knew it with more certainty than anyone. The *First Folio* is everything you want, as you like it.

The History, or So It Goes: The debate is cacophonous, and it is nearly pointless: Who wrote Shakespeare's plays? Francis Bacon? Edward de Vere? Any of a dozen other nobles? Surely not that uneducated country bumpkin from Stratford who put his name to literature's finest works? How elitist. We spent centuries developing a society where anyone can become whatever they want, and we can't even believe that a common man can understand us.

Regardless, John Heminges and Henry Condell published the *First Folio* in 1623, seven years after the uberbard's death. It contained 36 plays (all but Pericles) and Shakespeare's poems and sonnets. Many had been published before, and most had been performed. For the first time, though, anyone who could afford a book could get the book. It covered every theater style—tragedy, comedy, and history—for every occasion.

Many editions followed, of course, but despite the availability of Shakespeare's writings, the *First Folio* remains the most sought-out literary documents, even in an age where all the text is available for free downloads.

Epic Powers: This leather-bound tome can be read from while making any Perform check that involves words or music, assuming words can be spoken while performing. Doing so gives a +30 enhancement bonus to Perform checks. At will, the reader may take a full-round action to cast *enthrall* or the friendship or despair version of the *emotion* spell, all heightened to 6th-level spells (DC 22).

Lesser folios exist, allowing a +10 bonus and only a normal *enthrall* spell at DC 14. These copies are nonepic items.

Caster Level: 3rd (lesser), 17th (First); **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, bardic music class feature, *enthrall* (lesser), plus Craft Epic Wondrous Item, Heighten Spell, *emotion* (first); **Market Price:** 12,800 gp (lesser), 385,200 gp (First); **Weight:** 3 lbs. (lesser), 4 lbs. (First).

The Hope Diamond

"Tragedies, for anyone who lives, are not escapable."

—diamond owner Evalyn Walsh McLean

One of the most inaccurately named items in history, the Hope Diamond combines the ultimate attraction with the ultimate penalty. Though doubtlessly among the most valuable objects on earth, the stone comes with the reputation of a curse. Laughed off by many, the rumored curse nonetheless has left an impressive trail of bankruptcy, theft, and unexpected death in its wake. Perhaps the ultra-rich are just prone to such things. Perhaps the diamond just likes tragedy.

The History, or So It Goes: If you believe the tales, a blue diamond was pried from the eyesocket of a statue of the Hindu goddess Sita. She embedded a curse in her lost eye, promising ill luck and death for all who touched it. The first owner, Jean Baptiste Tavernier, sold the 112-carat diamond to the Sun King, Louis XIV, then got torn to shreds by wild dogs in Russia. After the Sun King recut the diamond to 67 carats and mounted it in a necklace, his descendant Louis XVI gave it to his wife, Marie Antoinette. After the French monarchy bankrupted itself, revolution came. The guillotine's blade cut Marie just above the necklace.

The French crown jewels then belonged to the people, until their vault in the Garde-Meuble was burglarized. Decades later, when the French government offered amnesty on post-Reign of Terror thievery, a 44-carat blue diamond surfaced in England, likely the one stolen from France. The wealthy Hope family, who named the diamond, were

For Your Campaign

Whether you have the *Epic Level Handbook* or not, the items in this article can find a place in nearly any campaign. Here are some ideas for incorporating items of this power level into your campaign regardless of the character's level:

The Wealth of Nations: These items are so powerful that they can impact the existence and sovereignty of nations. Any could be the most powerful item at a nation's disposal.

Prophesied Returns: The items are long gone, but their effects and legends live on. Lesser copies might exist, and many might quest after such powerful treasures.

The items' connection to the real world need not be a hindrance. Simply changing the name and the physical description for the item can disguise its real-world origins. For example:

- The *stone of destiny* could become the *crown of command.*
- *Crocea Mors* could become the *Sword of Kas.*
- The *Codex Hammer* might become the *book of supreme knowledge*, or the *Lost Book of Bhaal.*
- The *lamentation stone of the Taj Mahal* might become the *ruby of despair.*

forced to sell it after foundering on a sea of gambling debts and high spending. And on and on it goes: A Russian prince gave the diamond to an exotic dancer and then killed her. A Greek owner drove himself and his family off a cliff. A murderous Turkish sultan was driven from power.

Eventually the diamond came to Washington Post heir Evalyn Walsh McLean. In grand fashion, she proceeded to lose her husband to mental illness, her son to a car crash, her daughter to suicide, her newspaper to insolvency, and, after her death, the Hope to debt relief. Jeweler Harry Winston bought it and quickly gave it to the Smithsonian Institution, allegedly to avoid the curse. It is now the Smithsonian's most popular exhibit.

It's a fascinating history, with just enough truth to string together a curse. Some owners and fates can't be verified, naturally, and several owners inconveniently didn't come to ruin. Whatever the truth, quite a bit of tragedy is associated with one simple stone.

Epic Powers: This inch-wide, light blue diamond flashes with reds and yellows. It appears to be a "normal" 1,000,000 gp blue diamond, currently in a 350,000 gp setting of 61 smaller diamonds. It does not radiate magic, but comes with a powerful curse. Every day, a new epic curse affects the owner for the day. Roll on this table once per day:

d%	Curse
01-10	Mysteriously lose d% times 1,000 gp worth of property
11-20	Suffer -2d8 enhancement penalty to Wisdom
21-30	Suffer -2d8 enhancement penalty to Intelligence
31-40	Suffer -2d8 enhancement penalty to Charisma
41-50	Suffer -2d8 enhancement penalty to Dexterity
51-60	Suffer -2d8 enhancement penalty to Strength
61-70	Suffer -2d8 enhancement penalty to Constitution
71-80	Act as if affected by a *confusion* spell for 2d20 rounds once per hour
81-90	Roll all saves and skill checks twice and take worst result
91-00	Gain 2d8 temporary negative levels (never permanent)

Each curse can be detected only by observation of results, not by magic. (The DM should not tell the player of a Hope Diamond owner which curse affects her.) Any curse removal spell requires a caster level check against the diamond's caster level to dispel the day's curse; the next day, a new curse strikes. The curse strikes at a random time each day.

Caster Level: 29th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, Craft Epic Wondrous Item, any epic spell with the Afflict seed; **Market Price:** 1,650,000 gp; **Cost to Create:** 1,500,000 gp + 12,000 XP; **Weight:** —.

The Lamentation Stone of the Taj Mahal

"Design the mausoleum for my deceased wife, Mumtaz, on whom may there be peace, and for myself."
—Shah Jahan, to his architect

The world has places whose gloom comes from what men did there: Auschwitz, Bataan, Antietam, the Trail of Tears. But the world has one place whose gloom derives from the emotion of the men who built it. India's Taj Mahal, a white marble mausoleum on Agra's Yamuna River, stands as a shrine to a beloved wife. Its very sadness is embedded in its stone.

The History, or So It Goes: In the 1600s, the Mughal Emperor, Shah Jahan, learned of a sculptor so gifted he could capture a person's likeness just by seeing her hands for a moment. This sculptor boasted a wager: If the Shah summoned all the unmarried women of his court, the sculptor would select the most beautiful. If he created the perfect statue of her, she would be his to wed. If he failed, he would forfeit his life. Impressed, the Shah called the veiled women forth. From the assemblage, the sculptor chose the hands of the most beautiful: the Shah's own daughter. Instantly, the sculptor loved the Princess. When he finished his work, the court gasped in awe. The Shah could not deny the statue's unrivaled beauty, but he had promised the princess to his general. Shamefully, the Shah could not honor his promise to the sculptor.

Years later, Allah took the Shah's favorite wife, Mumtaz Mahal. So distraught his hair turned bright white, Shah Jahan became obsessed with building a grand mausoleum in which he could be buried beside his beloved, but who could design the tomb to reflect the weight in his heart? He called the sculptor and apologized for his dishonor, which he felt he could set right. The princess was still unmarried, her general killed in war. Should the sculptor design the perfect Taj Mahal, he could have the object of his desire. To this the sculptor delightfully agreed, and he set to work.

But something was not right. The joyous sculptor's designs failed to capture the Shah's feeling of loss. A vizier suggested a tragic but practical solution: The Shah must tell the sculptor that the princess was sick unto death. This Shah Jahan did, and the sculptor's heart filled with sorrow. He set to paper one more design, one that reflected the grief in his soul. To capture the loss, a special white marble was brought in by a thousand elephants.

Of course, as the sculptor showed the successful design to the Shah, all was revealed. The Shah had his design, the sculptor had his quite healthy princess, and, after 22 years of construction, the world had its greatest mausoleum.

Epic Powers: The *lamentation stone of the Taj Mahal* is a brilliant white marble. The stone permanently emanates an enlarged (as the Enlarge Spell metamagic feat) despair version of the *emotion* spell in a 30-foot radius. This *emotion* is affected by the Improved Heightened Spell feat (treated as a 10th-level spell, DC 30).

Caster Level: 21st; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, Craft Epic Wondrous Item, Enlarge Spell, Improved Heighten Spell, *emotion, wall of stone;* **Market Price:** 463,050 gp per 5-foot cube; **Weight:** 400 lbs.

Rabbi Loew's Golem

"Shanti, Shanti, Dahat, Dahat!"
—mystic words for animating a golem

Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley may have given us the modern Prometheus, but Frankenstein's monster had a spiritual ancestor. In the Prague of the late 16th century, a monster walked the earth. Formed of riverbed clay and good intentions, this "golem," as the Jews called him, did the work of an entire community. But too much idleness leads to chaos, and what was made was unmade for the good of all. All, of course, save the golem.

The History, or So It Goes: In 1579, a slander spread through central Europe like a midsummer blaze: The Jews used the blood of Christian children in the preparation of their Passover bread. In a time when man would not protect the Chosen of God, Rabbi Judah Loew ben Bezalel, the chief justice of the Jewish population in Prague, turned to scripture for defense.

As the rabbi knelt in prayer, a mysterious voice said, "Make a man of clay and you will thwart your enemies." In the Kabbalah texts, the rabbi learned of a spirit animated of clay. "What could a golem cost?" the rabbi wondered. "Nothing at all, for the work of many can be done by one who needs not money or food." Four elements were needed for the creation of such a creature. Being a man of God, the rabbi embodied air, while his son-in-law embodied fire and his pupil water. Earth was needed, so the rabbi danced at the banks of the Moldavka River and sang the mystic words: "Shanti, Shanti, Dahat, Dahat!"

From the clay sprang an 11-foot-tall man of thirty years. Rabbi Loew put him to work defending the Jewish people and performing tasks needed to ease the people's burdens. Each night the rabbi placed in the golem's mouth a piece of paper bearing its daily command, and by the morning the work was done. Still, the golem showed precious little ability to judge its work; when shown how to eat bread, it would just as likely eat a brick. The rabbi reasoned that it would judge tasks better if it learned of the world, so he taught the golem to read. After reading all the rabbi's books, it learned that it wanted to be a person. It began to behave like a child, but was far stronger than a child. The ensuing devastation led the heartbroken rabbi to deactivate the golem by speaking the mystic words backward.

Could this story be true? Rabbi Loew certainly existed, and the Kabbalah talks of golems. But no trace remains of Rabbi Loew's golem, having either literally or metaphorically fallen back into the clay from whence it came.

Epic Powers: Rabbi Loew's golem is an epic golem (see the Epic Golems section at the end of this article).

The Rosetta Stone

"The men of Egypt magnify and honor the God Epiphanes Eucharistos the king, according to the law."

—text of the Rosetta Stone

The most stunning linguistic discovery of all time, the Rosetta Stone revealed the mysteries of one of the greatest civilizations on earth. Before the 19th century, even the residents of Egypt could not understand their past. Ironically, the invasion of their country by a foreign power gave them—and the world—the key to unlocking the secrets of their glorious history.

The History, or So It Goes: Napoleon Bonaparte was on the move. Invading the Mediterranean delta of Egypt, his troops paused at the city of Rosetta in 1799. Dismantling a wall in Fort St. Julien, a French engineer unearthed a simple piece of black basalt, upon which were some very complex writings. In ancient Greek and in two forms of alien hieroglyphics (which means "sacred writings"), the two-millennia-old ancient priests of Memphis had carved a paean to King Ptolemy in words and pictures. Or so it seemed.

A French scholar, Jean Champollion, worked to translate it. It took him 20 years, some say. Others say he never did, for Champollion believed the symbols meant things, not sounds. It took an Englishman, Thomas Young, to find the name of King Ptolemy in the hieroglyphs. It wasn't a single picture representing the pharaoh, but rather a series of letters in ornate picture form. Hieroglyphs were an exceedingly rich alphabet, not a narrative. Armed with this insight, the scholars cracked the code written on countless temple walls and plundered artifacts. The decree of Ptolemy became a window to the past.

The stone is now one of the most popular exhibits in the British Museum.

Epic Powers: The *Rosetta Stone* is a piece of black basalt measuring 5 inches in length, 28 1/2 inches in width, and 11 inches in thickness. Reading the stone requires a total of 84 hours over a minimum of seven days, after which the reader may make an Intelligence check (DC 30), with a bonus of +1 per language the reader knows. If the check is successful, the reader permanently gains the Polyglot feat regardless of prerequisites. (For a literate user, the Polyglot feat allows the speaking, reading, and writing of all languages.) The stone develops inherent understanding; if the reader uses any magical method to read the stone, no check is allowed. The reader may invest as many weeks as he desires, gaining a check at the end of each week during which 84 hours were invested.

Caster Level: 23rd; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, Craft Epic Wondrous Item, Polyglot, *permanency, tongues;* **Market Price:** 293,700 gp; **Cost to Create:** 71,850 gp + 23,748 XP; **Weight:** 1,676 lbs.

The Sphinx

"What walks on four legs in the morning, two legs at noon, and three legs in the evening?"

—the Riddle of the Sphinx

The answer, of course, is "Man." That's an easy one. The hard riddle is how a civilization without electricity, fossil fuel, or any obvious reason to divert so many resources made the Sphinx in the first place. The largest object made out of a single block prior to the 20th century, the Sphinx at Giza towers above all architectural feats of the time, per-

Standing Stone Market Price and Creation Cost

Spell Level	Caster Level	Market Price	Cost to Create
0	13th	85,408 gp	42,704 gp + 3,417 XP
1st	15th	86,800 gp	43,400 gp + 3,472 XP
2nd	17th	100,800 gp	50,400 gp + 4,032 XP
3rd	19th	126,000 gp	63,000 gp + 5,040 XP
4th	21st	162,400 gp	81,200 gp + 6,496 XP
5th	23rd	210,000 gp	105,000 gp + 8,400 XP
6th	25th	268,800 gp	134,400 gp + 10,752 XP
7th	27th	338,800 gp	169,400 gp + 13,552 XP
8th	29th	397,600 gp	198,800 gp + 15,904 XP
9th	31st	462,000 gp	231,000 gp + 18,480 XP

haps excepting the mighty pyramids it guards. Who built it? Some say pharaohs, some say aliens.

The History, or So It Goes: The Egyptians called it Hor-em-akht, or "Horus in the Horizon." The Greeks called it the Sphinx, or "strangler." So who needed a 240-foot-long strangler to guard them? Scholars believe that Pharaoh Khafre, son of Cheops, commissioned the colossus, making it more than 4,600 years old. They note the alignment of the sphinx with Khafre's pyramid, and a rock tablet dedicated to Khafre about 1,000 years after this supposed construction date. But great debate rages on this point, as the sciences of history, meteorology, astronomy, and even ufology weigh in with opinions, some crediting the construction as before the dawn of Egyptian civilization. No one can say for sure.

The work of these creators, whomever they were, might have gone unnoticed in the modern age if not for, once again, Napoleon's conquering soldiers. The French excavated the monolith from the sand, though unlike the Rosetta Stone, they didn't attempt to cart it back to Europe. They didn't shoot off its nose like some say, though Turkish soldiers did use it for target practice once. The unkind cuts in the face of the Sphinx come from the ravages of weather. Restoration work has continued since its rediscovery, often with little success in slowing down time's stern ruination. Through it all, the Sphinx has continued to smile proudly, perhaps confident its pharaohs will return.

Epic Powers: The Sphinx is an epic golem (see the Epic Golems section at the end of this article).

The Stone of Destiny

"We'll take what he's giving us back, and then we'll ask for more."

—a Scottish National Party spokesman, on John Major's return of the Stone of Scone

Separated now by a North Channel's worth of ideological and religious differences, the Stone of Scone (pronounced "skoon") and the Blarney Stone were thought to be part of the same stone. To the nobles of Scotland and Ireland, they became relics of national pride and burrs in the robes of the English monarchs. They held the power to crown rulers and confer powers of statecraft and, some say, powers of magical influence.

The History, or So It Goes: The Scots had a knack for crowning kings. As *Macbeth* shows, they crowned a new ruler whenever a noble strove to take the crown by force, if not by dint of bloodline. Despite this royal turnover, the Scots did the crowning part right. The anointed one would stand upon the mighty Liag Phail, the Stone of Destiny, and be dubbed king of all the lands of Scotland. None could doubt the majesty the stone conferred.

Somehow, if legends are to be believed, the Stone of Destiny broke in twain around the turn of the 13th century. In 1296, the Stone of Scone (the Scottish half) was rock-napped by angry Brits, and, to the Scots' horror, built into the English royal coronation chair to symbolize British dominion over Scotland. There it remained for seven centuries, until the English gave it back to Scotland in 1996, conditioned on returning it for coronations.

Meanwhile, in 1314, the other half of the Stone of Destiny was given by Scotland's Robert the Bruce to Irish chieftain Cormac Teige McCarthy for his support in the Battle of Bannockburn. Cormac brought it to Blarney Castle, just north of Cork. Soon lodged in a high castle wall, the Blarney Stone became a symbol of Irish pride when Queen Elizabeth I asked that the Irish chiefs give up dominion over their own lands, becoming governors of British soil. McCarthy returned an answer so diplomatic and noncommittal that Elizabeth quipped that he was giving her "a lot of Blarney." Thousands of visitors have flooded Blarney Castle to lean over the castle wall and kiss the stone, hoping to gain the gift of Blarney themselves.

All true? Maybe so, maybe not. Geologists note that the Blarney Stone is made of limestone, and the Stone of Scone is of sandstone. So how could they be from the same stone? Believers say the stones you see today are fakes substituted by clever monks, and the real stones are still out there, waiting for Scotland and Ireland to rise against the British crown. Then again, that could just be a lot of Blarney.

Epic Powers: The *Stone of Scone* is a sandstone block measuring 26 inches in length, 16 inches in height, and 11 inches in depth. When a full round is spent standing upon it and a command word is uttered, it grants a permanent +1 inherent bonus to one's Sense Motive checks. If the grantee has the Leadership feat, this bonus rises to +10. Having the Epic Leadership feat means the bonus becomes +20, and the Legendary Commander feat means it becomes +30. Each advance may occur once and requires standing on the stone anew to cause the advance to occur.

The *Blarney Stone,* a limestone of similar size, has the same powers, except that it must be kissed for a full round to gain its effects, and the bonuses apply to the Bluff skill. (This means that if the monarchs of Scotland and Ireland are different people, each gains no advantage in negotiations with the other. If they're the same person, that person will be exceedingly clever in negotiations.)

Caster Level: 23rd; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, Craft Epic Wondrous Item, *permanency, charm person* (Blarney), *detect thoughts* (Scone); **Market Price:** 300,000 gp; **Cost to Create:** 112,500 gp + 24,000 XP; **Weight:** 336 lbs.

Stonehenge

"And where are they now, the little people of Stonehenge? And what would they say to us, if we were here . . . tonight?"

—Nigel Tufnel of Spinal Tap

Nigel might be thick as an 18-inch megalith, but he's onto something. Although you can drive by Stonehenge just off the A303 on your way from London to Cornwall, you won't gain any more knowledge of who assembled the 20-foot-high stones or where they went after assembling them. Some doubt they were people at all.

The History, or So It Goes: Unlike many subjects in this article, Stonehenge doesn't have a history. By the time anyone with a written language showed up in southern England, Stonehenge was already there, no longer used for its great purpose, whatever it was. There are theories, of course: It's a device for channeling the earth's power, it's a giant clock, it's a druidic sacrifice site, it's a marketplace, it's an astronomical observatory, it's a racetrack, it's the hub of an array of ley lines, it's a UFO landing platform, it's Merlin's personal magical lab, or it's anything you want it to be.

Whatever it is, it's huge. Its two rings might have been an outer ring with 30 vertical and 30 horizontal smaller menhirs (standing stones), and an inner ring of either five or six sets of three larger menhirs, one atop the other two in an arrangement called a trilithion. About 36 of the stones in the entire outer ring and (if there was one) the sixth trilithion are gone, leaving 24 large and 15 giant menhirs. How they got there is problematic; if you don't buy the alien-transport theory, the Merlin-floating-them-from-Ireland theory, or the Celtic-giants-carrying-them-from-Africa theory, all you've got is a bunch of primitive people hauling and lifting some very heavy slabs. The druids might have had something to do with it, but they didn't leave any record of being serious architects like the ancient Egyptians, at least not other than the stones themselves.

Epic Powers: The nonepic *standing stones* in *Masters of the Wild* allow a druid to gain the feats Empower Spell, Enlarge Spell, and Extend Spell when casting a specified spell while in physical contact with that spell's menhir. A specific sacrifice activates it for the druid only, though others may do so by making the same sacrifice (this information can be learned using *meld into stone* on the menhir). Such *standing stones* are usually arranged in a circle so that a druid can cast a spell and move to another stone in one round. The stones of the outer ring fit this description.

An *epic standing stone* works similarly, except that it allows Enlarge Spell, Extend Spell, and Intensify Spell, maximizing variable effects, then doubling them. The eighteen inner stones each affect one spell, according to the list below. Although many of the stones have fallen in the modern world, this list includes all eighteen inner stones:

Affected Spell	Required Sacrifice
animal shapes	rodents
word of recall	gold
shapechange	liquids
shambler	leaves
sum. nature's ally VIII	herbivores
sum. nature's ally IX	carnivores
command plants	trees
sympathy	aromatic plants
antipathy	diseased plants
sunburst	bats
whirlwind	birds
earthquake	stone
repel metal or stone	iron
reverse gravity	nothing
finger of death	humanoids
foresight	artwork
mass heal	magic items
elemental swarm	bees

The caster level and market price (not including transportation) are determined by the level of the spell the stone affects. (Generally, this is the minimum caster level to cast an intensified version of the spell, and the costs of a normal *standing stone* of that level times 8. All Stonehenge *epic standing stones* are 8th and 9th level.)

Prerequisites: Craft Wondrous Item, Craft Epic Wondrous Item, Intensify Spell, *meld into stone,* ability to cast the chosen spell; **Weight:** 24,000 lb.

More Megaliths

Some 50,000 megaliths exist, most clearly placed in arrangements by intelligent beings. Here are a few more in the British Isles adapted for epic campaigns, with different powers than Stonehenge.

Avebury Circle: A series of once more than 100 abstract "male" and "female" symbols stands in the Wiltshire countryside. Historians postulate that these male and female stones were the site of fertility rituals.

Epic Powers: The female stones allow a caster of *reincarnate* to specify the incarnation. The male stones apply the Intensify Spell feat to the casting of *awaken.* **Caster Level:** 17th (female), 19th (male); **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, Craft Epic Wondrous Item, Intensify Spell, *reincarnate* (female), *awaken* (male); **Market Price:** 162,400 (female), 210,000 (male); **Weight:** 12,000 lbs. (female), 16,000 lbs. (male).

Callanish Circle: In the Outer Hebrides, this closely packed grouping of stones was said to host a beneficent spirit who appeared at the summer solstice. Couples came here to make marriage vows.

Epic Powers: Each stone applies Intensify Spell to any *summon nature's ally* spell (up to *summon nature's ally VII*), and allows the summoned creature(s) to stay in existence as long as the caster maintains physical contact with the stone.

Caster Level: 27th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, Craft Epic Wondrous Item, Intensify Spell, *summon nature's ally VII;* **Market Price:** 677,600 gp; **Weight:** 8,000 lbs.

The Cornwall Healing Stone: A 5-foot-wide, donut-shaped stone stands upright on the plain of Cornwall in southwestern England. Sick children were passed through the hole, called Men-an-tol, to be cured of ailments.

Epic Powers: This stone applies the Intensify Spell feat to any Conjuration (healing) spell of 6th level or lower as long as the caster is a druid.

Caster Level: 17th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, Craft Epic Wondrous Item, Intensify Spell, *heal, remove disease, neutralize poison;* **Market Price:** 537,600 gp; Weight: 7,000 lbs.

The Druids' Altar: This flat table rock rests upon a mound of large stones in southwest Ireland. It is a portal dolmen, marking the entrance to a burial vault.

Epic Powers: This stone applies the Intensify Spell feat to *finger of death* (affecting damage done on a save), as well as Improved Heighten Spell (raising it to an 11th-level spell, increasing its save DC by +4).

Caster Level: 35th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, Craft Epic Wondrous Item, Improved Heighten Spell, Intensify Spell, *finger of death;* **Market Price:** 338,800 gp; **Weight:** 16,000 lbs.

Swinside Circle: The circle's 55 remaining stones are sinking into the northern England soil. Legends say the sinking is the work of the devil, who visits nightly.

Epic Powers: This circle is unique, in that most druids can't use it. Each stone applies Intensify Spell to any *summon monster* spell up to *summon monster VII* and allows the summoned creature(s) to stay in existence as long as the caster maintains physical contact with the stone. This benefit applies only when the user summons a fiendish creature.

Caster Level: 27th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, Craft Epic Wondrous Item, Intensify Spell, *summon monster VII;* **Market Price:** 677,600 gp; **Weight:** 8,000 lbs.

EPIC GOLEMS

Unlike the vast majority of golems, these epic golems are possessed of Intelligence. They can read and speak, albeit haltingly and without much depth of content. These golems share all normal golem characteristics and construct traits as described in the *Monster Manual.*

Rabbi Loew's Golem

Rabbi Loew's golem is a clay golem of larger-than-normal size. It stands 11 feet tall and weighs about 3,000 pounds. It resembles a neckless, jointless human man, although it is clearly made of red clay. It longs to be human, but it follows orders without question.

Combat

Rabbi Loew's golem appears to shamble, but it can move with a frenetic speed.

Alacrity (Su): Once per round, Rabbi Loew's golem may take an extra partial action (either before or after its other actions of the round).

Rage (Ex): In combat, the golem can rage as a 21st-level barbarian. Since it never tires, it never drops out of rage until ordered to do so by its creator. While enraged, it attacks all creatures not designated as allies before combat. When it runs out of eligible targets, it attacks objects.

Wound (Ex): The damage the golem deals doesn't heal naturally. Only a *heal* spell or another healing spell of 6th level or higher can heal the damage.

Magic Immunity (Ex): The golem is immune to all spells, spell-like abilities, and supernatural effects, except as follows: A *move earth* spell deals 1d12 points of damage to it. A *disintegrate* spell negates the golem's alacrity ability for 1d4 rounds. An *earthquake* spell stops it from moving for 1 round, deals 2d10 points of damage to it, and ends its rage for the combat.

Invisibility Amulet (Su): A *hartskin amulet* in the golem's chest gives it limitless *improved invisibility* at the creator's command. The amulet functions for no one but the golem.

Immune to Slashing and Piercing (Ex): Slashing and piercing weapons deal no damage to the golem.

Skill Paragon (Ex): The golem has no skills, but it gains a +40 competence bonus to Dexterity-, Strength-, or Wisdom-based skills its creator asks it to use. It can't use Charisma-, Constitution-, or Intelligence-based skills (except Craft skills). It can use this ability for one skill per day, up to 24 hours per day if needed.

Construction

The golem's body is sculpted from 1 and 1/2 tons of clay. It costs 300,000 gold pieces to create, including 3,000 gp for vestments, which can be reused. Assembling the body requires a successful Knowledge (religion) check (DC 30).

The creator must be good, 23rd level, have the Craft Epic Wondrous Items feat, and be able to cast divine spells. Completing the ritual drains 6,000 XP from the creator and requires *animate objects, commune, earthquake, miracle,* and *true resurrection.*

Epic Golems

	Rabbi Loew's Golem Large Construct	The Sphinx Colossal Construct
Hit Dice:	44d10 (185 hp)	248d10 (1,240 hp)
Initiative:	-1 (Dex)	+0
Speed:	40 ft., burrow 20 ft.	20 ft. (can't run), burrow 20 ft.
AC:	31 (-1 size, -1 Dex, +23 natural)	120 (-8 size, +128 natural)
Attacks:	2 slams +37 melee	2 slams +326 melee
Damage:	Slam 4d10+15	Slam 24d10+140
Face/Reach:	5 ft. by 5 ft./10 ft.	40 ft. by 240 ft./40 ft.
Special Attacks:	Alacrity, rage, wound	Spell-like abilities, strangle
Special Qualities:	Construct, magic immunity, invisibility amulet, immune to piercing and slashing, damage reduction 50/+5, skill paragon	Construct, magic immunity, damage reduction 300/+30, blindsight, tremorsense
Saves:	Fort +14, Ref +13, Will +14	Fort +82, Ref + 82, Will +82
Abilities:	Str 41, Dex 9, Con –, Int 5, Wis 11, Cha 1	Str 290, Dex 10, Con –, Int 30, Wis 11, Cha 1
Climate/Terrain:	Any land	Warm desert
Organization:	Solitary	Solitary
Challenge Rating:	25	100
Treasure:	None	None
Alignment:	Always neutral good	Always neutral
Advancement:	45-66 HD (Large); 67-132 HD (Huge)	251-750 HD (Colossal)

The Sphinx

The Sphinx is a stone golem with a lion's body and a pharaoh's head. It stands 66 feet tall and 240 feet long, and its weight is incalculable. It can only be animated by the word of a pharaoh with the Legendary Commander feat. Otherwise, it is a block of stone.

Combat

The Sphinx uses magical effects at a distance and punishing physical slams on those nearby.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will—*forcecage, incendiary cloud* (of hot sand), *insanity.* These abilities are as intensified (variable effects maximized, then doubled, as the Intensify Spell epic metamagic feat) spells cast by a 60th-level sorcerer.

Strangle (Ex): If the Sphinx hits a creature with both slams in one round, it smashes the air out of that creature. Assuming the creature breathes (and survives the damage), it must make an immediate Constitution check (DC 134) or fall unconscious (0 hp). One round later, the creature drops to -1 hit points and is dying. The next round, it dies.

Magic Immunity (Ex): The Sphinx is immune to all spells, spell-like abilities, and supernatural effects.

Blindsight (Ex): The Sphinx has blindsight to 1,000 feet.

Tremorsense (Ex): The Sphinx has tremorsense to 1,000 feet.

Construction

The Sphinx is sculpted from living basalt, and it cannot be moved during construction. It costs 500,000,000 gold pieces to create. Assembling the body requires a successful Knowledge (architecture and engineering) check (DC 100).

The creator must be 100th level, have the Craft Epic Wondrous Items feat, and be able to cast divine spells. Completing the ritual drains 10,000,000 XP from the creator and requires the epic spell *animate the Sphinx,* inscribed on a stone tablet in hieroglyphics. This spell has a DC of 1,178, takes 12 years to cast, deals 999d6 backlash damage upon completion, and requires the assistance of 100 spellcasters all contributing *miracle.*

You are 20 years older than your fellow adventurers.
You have a d4 for hit points.
You can't wear armor.
You have to carry a giant book with you wherever you go.
You have big plans. Very big plans.
You need all the help you can get.

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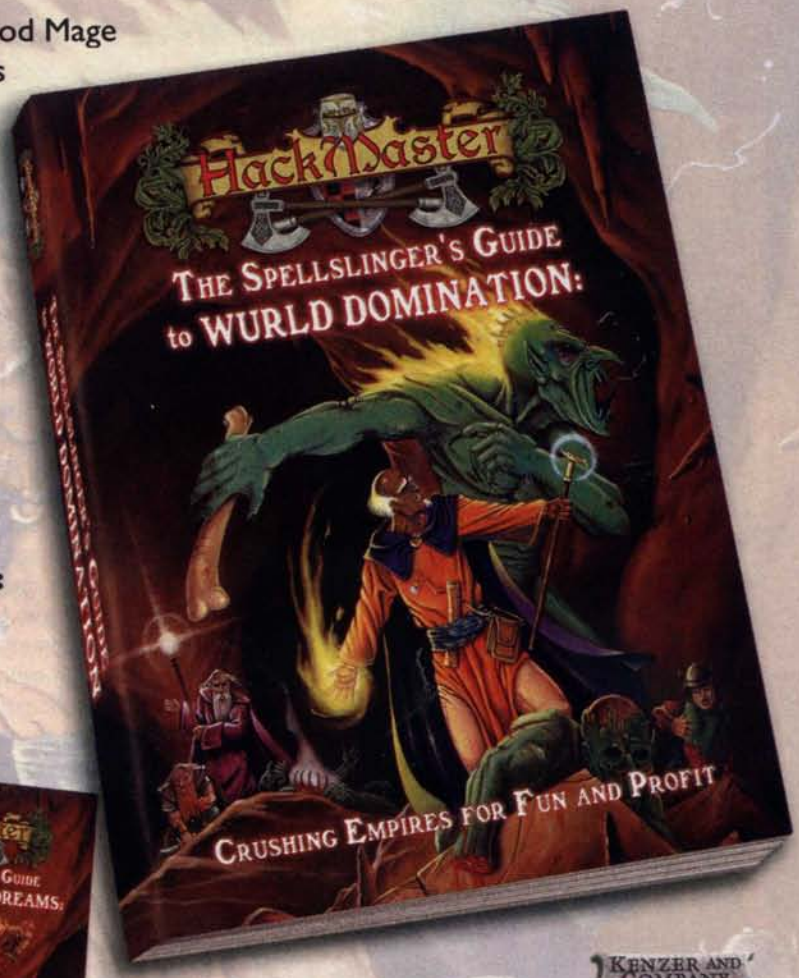

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RIVAL THE GODS

Epic Prestige Classes

by Andy Collins · Illustrated by Steve Garcia

Even epic-level characters need something to strive for, and that's where the epic prestige class comes in. By definition, characters can't begin advancing in an epic prestige class until they have reached epic levels, but once they do, even the sky isn't the limit.

As noted in the *Epic Level Handbook,* characters add levels of epic prestige classes using the same rules as when multiclassing into a new character class at epic levels: Base save and base attack bonus progressions are replaced by epic save and attack progressions. Just like all other classes, you may take as many levels in an epic prestige class as you'd like. Even though the charts here show only 10 levels of progression, the accompanying text indicates how the class features continue beyond those shown.

Designing an Epic Prestige Class

Since all epic-level campaigns are undoubtedly unique, DMs should consider creating their own epic prestige classes, personalized to their own campaigns. All the normal guidelines still apply—aim for specialization over generality and create clear requirements that can be met without too much DM fiat. Don't forget to include requirements that can't be met until the character reaches at least 21st level, otherwise your class might not be that epic after all! Use the classes here and those presented in the *Epic Level Handbook* as guides.

Remember that since base attack bonuses and the base save bonuses increase at a fixed rate beyond 20th level, you can't use those as balancing factors as you would with a typical prestige class. Instead, an epic prestige class offers only three potential elements: Hit Dice, spellcasting improvement, and class features. Assigning an appropriate Hit Dice amount is no different than at non-epic levels. For spellcasting improvement, keep in mind that even though an epic prestige class can grant spellcasting improvement (which bumps up your caster level), a spellcaster's number of spells per day is capped at 20th level without the proper epic feats.

Ultimately, it is class features that separate epic prestige classes from one another. These are the most important elements of the class, and an epic prestige class's entire identity rests upon them. Remember to create class features that can improve over a nigh-infinite level progression—like the rogue's sneak attack damage or the barbarian's damage reduction. Try to avoid simply giving out ad hoc abilities at each level; if you do, the prestige class won't have any clear progression beyond the top level that you describe. If you must give a prestige class abilities that don't improve at a steady pace, remember to include a bonus feat progression that kicks in after the character reaches the "end" of the level progression you create. (For guidelines on how to assign bonus feats, see the *Epic Level Handbook* for versions of the classes presented in the *Player's Handbook* and *Dungeon Master's Guide.*)

Arcane Lord

When wizards dream, they dream of becoming arcane lords. The arcane lord is a true master of spellcasting, able to shape her arcane magics in ways that lesser beings can only dream of doing. In the arcane lord's opinion, if there is anything about arcane spells that she doesn't already know, it probably isn't worth knowing. Some might call this arrogance, but the arcane lord doesn't care what others think. To her, all that matters is the pursuit of the arcane and the mastery of things magical.

As the name suggests, the arcane lord prestige class is most appealing to arcane spellcasters. Generally speaking, sorcerers and wizards have the most to gain from this class. A bard highly dedicated to spellcasting could

If You Don't Have the *Epic Level Handbook*

Although the *Epic Level Handbook* will help you get the full benefit of this article, you can still use it for your game even if you don't own the book. If you aren't yet ready for epic-level games, consider using this article as a tool to help you prepare your player character or your players for epic-level play. With a little creativity, you can use many elements of this article right away.

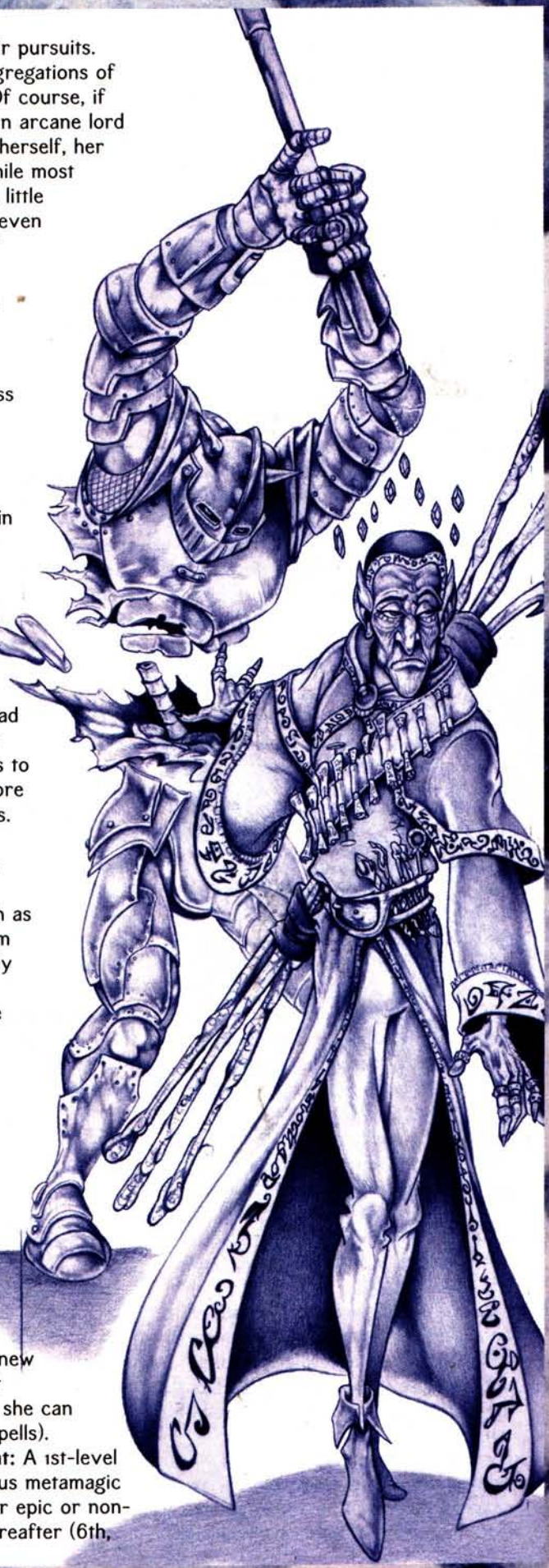
This article presents many interesting and powerful abilities, and any of them can be used in a non-epic game.

- A DM can create new monsters based on any of these exciting abilities. For example, the unholy ravager's corrupting touch and desecrating aura would make great abilities for a new type of undead.
- If a particular ability appeals to a player, consider imbuing a magic item with the ability. Perhaps the PC must undergo a challenging quest and prove his worth before being granted the magic item, or maybe he claims it as his reward for killing his arch-nemesis.
- Perhaps one of the abilities presented here would work with a prestige class a PC already has. For example, the perfected one's graceful movement ability could also be a useful high-level ability for a thief-acrobat (*Song and Silence*) who wishes to continue advancing in that prestige class.
- Players or DMs could also import these abilities into their game by creating new spells that mimic the abilities' powers. For example, a druid PC might uncover a spell based on the world's friend ability (world guardian prestige class) after discovering a long-forgotten druidic burial site.

You don't have to be epic to use this article. Your imagination is your only limit!

pursue this path as well. Other classes don't have much hope of qualifying for the high requirements and should look elsewhere for epic power.

NPC arcane lords are usually solitary individuals, preferring to spend time mastering their craft rather than interacting with those who can't possibly understand their pursuits. Since so few exist, congregations of arcane lords are rare. Of course, if the situation warrants, an arcane lord stands ready to defend herself, her home, and her allies. While most arcane lords might care little for those around them, even they see the benefits of strategic alliances with local emperors, princes, and high priests.



Class Features

All the following are class features of the arcane lord prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Characters gain no new proficiency in armor or weapons when they take a level of arcane lord.

Spells Per Day/Spells Known: At every level, the arcane lord gains new spells per day and spells known as if she had also gained a level in an arcane spellcasting class to which she belonged before adding the prestige class. She does not, however, gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained (such as bonus metamagic or item creation feats). If already an epic spellcaster, the character gains only the benefit noted under the Spells entry for that epic class. If the character possessed more than one arcane spellcasting class before she became an arcane lord, she must decide which class will receive the additional spellcasting level for purposes of determining spells per day when she adds the new level (although she must choose a class in which she can cast 10th-level arcane spells).

Bonus Metamagic Feat: A 1st-level arcane lord gains a bonus metamagic feat, which can be either epic or non-epic. Every 5 levels thereafter (6th,

11th, 16th, and so on), the arcane lord gains another bonus metamagic feat.

New Spell (Ex): At 2nd level and every other level thereafter, the arcane lord may learn one new arcane spell of any level she can cast. If she uses a spellbook, she may scribe this spell into her spellbook at no cost. Otherwise, the spell is simply added to the arcane lord's list of spells known. This spell knowledge is in addition to any she might gain from other sources.

Recall Spell (Su): At 3rd level, the arcane lord can use a standard action to recall any spell she has already cast within the past hour. Essentially, the character regains the prepared spell (in the case of characters who prepare spells) or the spell slot (in the case of characters who don't prepare spells). The arcane lord gains one additional use of this ability per day for every three levels after 3rd gained in this class (1/day at 3rd, 2/day at 6th, 3/day at 9th, and so on).

Expanded Spell Power (Ex): Beginning at 5th level, the arcane lord can (once per day) cast any spell that has an effect that is capped by level (such as *fireball*) as if the cap were twice the listed amount. For example, an arcane lord could cast a *fireball* that dealt 20d6 damage, rather than the normal maximum of 10d6, or a *magic missile* that fired 10 missiles, rather than the normal maximum of 5. The arcane lord's caster level still applies to such limits; for instance, even though a *delayed blast fireball* cast with expanded spell power has a new maximum damage of 30d8, an arcane lord whose caster level is 25 would only deal 25d8 points of damage with the spell.

For every 5 levels gained after 5th (10th, 15th, and so on), the arcane lord can use this ability one additional time per day. This power does not stack with the effects of the Enhance Spell epic feat.

Gauge Weakness (Su): At 7th level, the arcane lord may spend a standard action to analyze any single foe that he can see (even via a scrying effect). The arcane lord instantly knows all of that foe's current save bonuses (Fortitude, Reflex, and Will), thus allowing the arcane lord to better tailor her spell choice for the encounter. If the target's save bonuses change at a later time, the arcane lord is not automatically privy to this information. For every 10 levels beyond 7th (17th, 27th, and so on), the arcane lord may use this power one additional time per day.

Recognize Spell (Ex): At 9th level, the arcane lord instantly knows when an arcane spell is cast within line of sight, even if she can't see or hear the caster. The arcane lord also knows with unerring precision exactly what the spell is (including any metamagic effects). This ability doesn't grant any bonus to saves, but it can help the arcane lord's counterspell efforts immensely.

Arcane Mastery (Su): At 10th level, the arcane lord may, once per day, re-roll a random effect of any arcane spell she has just cast. For instance, she could re-roll damage from a *meteor swarm,* the effect of a *confusion* spell, or any other effect determined by a random roll of the dice. The character may then use either result. For every 10 levels beyond 10th (20th, 30th, and so on), the arcane lord may use this power one additional time per day, but not more than once per spell.

Arcane Lord Requirements

To qualify to become an arcane lord, a character must fulfill all of the following criteria.

Knowledge (arcana): 25 ranks.

Spellcraft: 25 ranks.

Feats: Skill Focus (Spellcraft), plus any five metamagic feats.

Epic Feats: Improved Spellcasting.

Spellcasting: Ability to cast 10th-level arcane spells.

Arcane Lord Class Skills

The arcane lord's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are:

Str: –

Dex: –

Con: Concentration.

Int: Knowledge (arcana), Scry, Spellcraft.

Wis: –

Cha: –

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.

Master of the Order of the Bow

The Way of the Bow, originally presented in *Sword and Fist,* describes the spiritual, philosophical, and religious aspects of archery. But while the Order of the Bow initiate dabbles in such learning, the master truly dedicates his life to these teachings. In doing so, the master reaches levels of enlightenment and spiritual understanding that defy explanation.

While fighters, rangers, and other combat-oriented characters can greatly benefit from this class, most who become masters of the Order of the Bow (or bow masters as they are often called) have already pursued advanced training in archery skills. Obviously, Order of the Bow initiates are singularly qualified to become masters, but arcane archers also find that much of their training overlaps with that required for this class. In fact, dedication to either of those prestige classes can greatly

Arcane Lord Advancement

HIT DIE D6

Class Level	Special	Spells Per Day
1	Bonus metamagic feat	+1 level of existing arcane spellcasting class
2	New spell	+1 level of existing arcane spellcasting class
3	Recall spell 1/day	+1 level of existing arcane spellcasting class
4	New spell	+1 level of existing arcane spellcasting class
5	Expanded spell power 1/day	+1 level of existing arcane spellcasting class
6	New spell, bonus metamagic feat, recall spell 2/day	+1 level of existing arcane spellcasting class
7	Gauge weakness 1/day	+1 level of existing arcane spellcasting class
8	New spell	+1 level of existing arcane spellcasting class
9	Recognize spell, recall spell 3/day	+1 level of existing arcane spellcasting class
10	New spell, arcane mastery, expanded spell power 2/day	+1 level of existing arcane spellcasting class

accelerate a character's entry into this prestige class.

Bow masters are highly revered individuals, respected for their dedication and extraordinary skills. Most bow masters feel driven to help others find the discipline of the Way of the Bow. Even those who continue adventuring often make time to give back to other would-be masters in the form of teaching, guidance, and example. Whether this occurs in the disciplined setting of an academy or while wandering through the countryside depends on each individual.

Bow Master Requirements

To qualify to become a bow master, a character must fulfill all of the following criteria.

Knowledge (religion): 12 ranks.

Feats: Weapon Focus (any bow), Weapon Specialization (any bow), Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Shot on the Run, Manyshot.

Epic Feats: Combat Archery, Epic Weapon Focus (any bow), Epic Weapon Specialization (any bow), Swarm of Arrows.

Special: Character may substitute the superior weapon focus class feature (see the Order of the Bow initiate prestige class in *Sword and Fist*) for the Epic Weapon Focus epic feat requirement.

Special: Character may substitute the superior weapon specialization class feature (see the Order of the Bow initiate prestige class in *Sword and Fist*) for the Epic Weapon Specialization epic feat requirement.

Special: Character may substitute the close combat shot class feature (see the Order of the Bow initiate prestige class in *Sword and Fist*) for the Combat Archery epic feat requirement.

Bow Master Class Skills

The Order of the Bow's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are:

Str: Swim.

Dex: Ride.

Con: –

Int: Craft (bowmaking), Knowledge (religion).

Wis: Spot.

Cha: –

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.

Class Features

All the following are class features of the bow master prestige class.

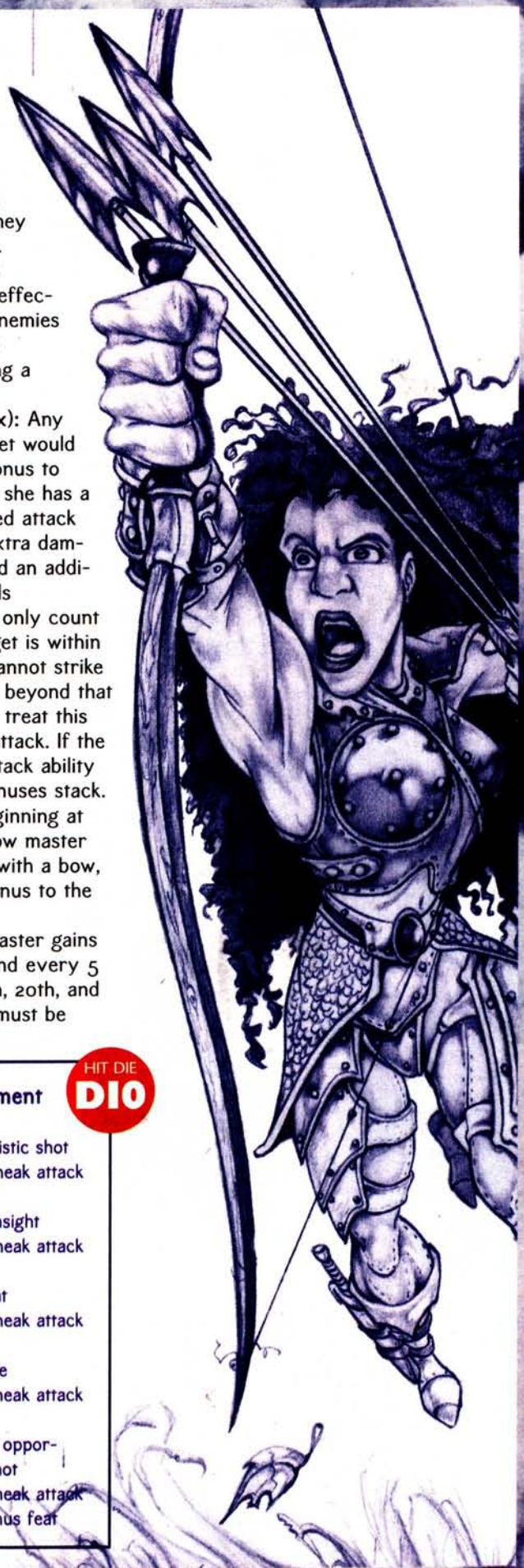
Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Characters gain no new proficiency in armor or weapons when they take a level of bow master.

Opportunistic Shot (Ex): At 1st level, a bow master effectively threatens adjacent enemies with his bow. He can make attacks of opportunity using a ranged weapon.

Ranged Sneak Attack (Ex): Any time the bow master's target would be denied her Dexterity bonus to AC (regardless of whether she has a Dexterity bonus), his ranged attack deals extra damage. The extra damage is +1d6 at 2nd level and an additional +1d6 every two levels thereafter. Ranged attacks only count as sneak attacks if the target is within 30 feet. The bow master cannot strike with such deadly accuracy beyond that range. In every other way, treat this ability as a rogue's sneak attack. If the character has the sneak attack ability from another class, the bonuses stack.

Combat Insight (Su): Beginning at 3rd-level, whenever the bow master makes a successful attack with a bow, he may add his Wisdom bonus to the damage dealt.

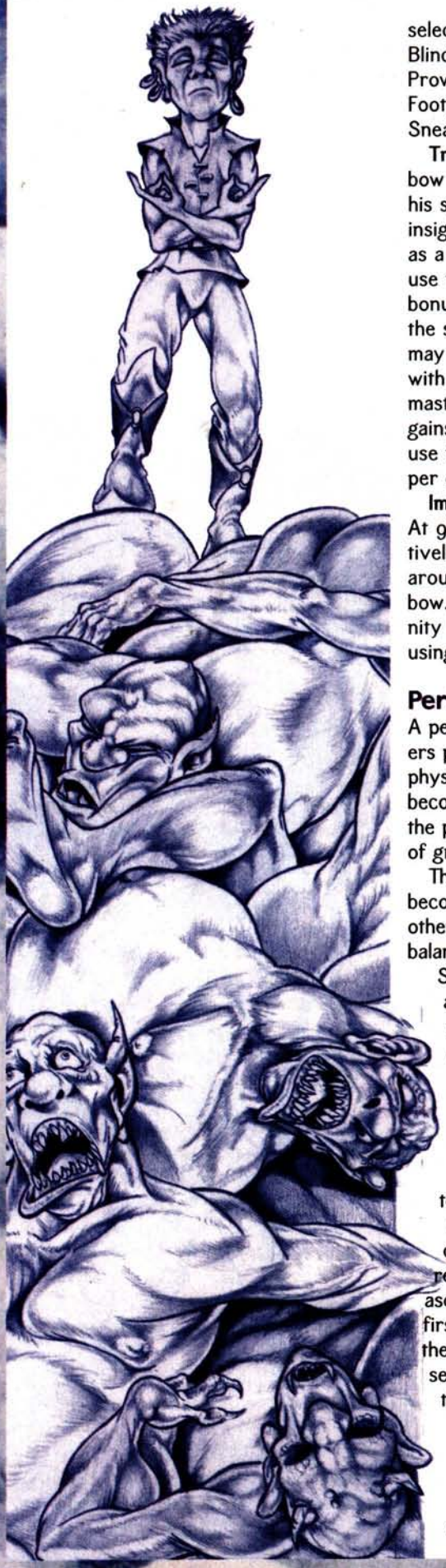
Bonus Feats: The bow master gains a bonus feat at 5th level and every 5 levels thereafter (10th, 15th, 20th, and so on). These bonus feats must be



Bow Master Advancement

HIT DIE D10

Class Level	Special
1	Opportunistic shot
2	Ranged sneak attack +1d6
3	Combat insight
4	Ranged sneak attack +2d6
5	Bonus feat
6	Ranged sneak attack +3d6
7	True strike
8	Ranged sneak attack +4d6
9	Improved opportunistic shot
10	Ranged sneak attack +5d6, bonus feat



selected from the following list: Blinding Speed, Distant Shot, Epic Prowess, Epic Toughness, Fleet of Foot, Improved Manyshot, Improved Sneak Attack, and Uncanny Accuracy.

True Strike (Su): At 7th level, the bow master becomes highly aware of his surroundings and gains an intuitive insight into the future. Once per day as a free action, the bow master may use this ability to gain a +20 insight bonus to a single attack roll as per the spell *true strike.* The insight bonus may only be applied to a ranged attack with a bow. For every 5 levels of bow master beyond 7th that the character gains (12th, 17th, and so on), he may use this power one additional time per day.

Improved Opportunistic Shot (Ex): At 9th level, the bow master effectively threatens an area 30 feet around him in all directions with his bow. He may make attacks of opportunity against opponents within 30 feet using a ranged weapon.

Perfected One

A perfected one transcends what others perceive as the limitations of the physical form. Body, mind, and soul become a single unified force, granting the perfected one an unparalleled level of grace and clarity in battle.

The vast majority of characters who become perfected ones are monks; few other classes have the discipline and balance to achieve the requirements. Some fighters, and even fewer paladins, have chosen to follow this path, although they must typically multiclass in order to meet the high base save bonuses required to become perfected ones. Other classes see little gain in this pursuit.

Perfected ones differ according to their personality. They might be solitary, gregarious, beatific, or diabolical. Some perfected ones return to their roots, teaching young ascetics at the monastery where they first learned their skills. Others walk the earth, dispensing justice as they see fit. Still others reason that with their perfect insight, they are best suited to rule over others—although such rule might be benevolent or repressive, depending on the perfected one's alignment.

Perfected One Requirements

To qualify to become a perfected one, a character must fulfill all of the following criteria.

Alignment: Any lawful.

Base Save Bonus: Fort +12, Ref +12, Will +12.

Concentration: 24 ranks.

Feats: Dodge, Expertise, Improved Unarmed Strike, Stunning Fist.

Epic Feats: Perfect Health.

Special: Character may substitute the purity of body (monk) or diamond body (henshin mystic, monk) class features for the Perfect Health epic feat requirement.

Perfected One Class Skills

The perfected one's class skills and the key ability for each skill are:

Str: –

Dex: Balance, Escape Artist, Move Silently, Tumble.

Con: Concentration.

Int: Knowledge (arcana), Scry, Spellcraft.

Wis: –

Cha: –

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.

Class Features

All the following are class features of the perfected one prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Characters gain no new proficiency in armor or weapons when they take a level in the perfected one prestige class. They suffer the same penalties for wearing armor that monks do.

Monk Multiclassing: A perfected one may continue to gain monk levels even after gaining one or more levels as a perfected one.

Battle Trance (Ex): The perfected one masters the art of letting her mind guide her attacks. At 1st level, she learns how to enter a battle trance. While in a battle trance, the perfected one gains a +4 bonus to Dexterity and Wisdom, and a +2 morale bonus to Fortitude saves. During the trance, the character may not cast spells, use spell-like abilities, or use spell-activation or spell-completion magic items (such as wands or scrolls). The battle trance only functions if the perfected one is wearing no armor. A battle

Perfected One Advancement

Class Level	Special	HIT DIE D8
1	Battle trance 1/day	
2	Combat insight	
3	Bonus feat	
4	Perfect grace, graceful movement, battle trance 2/day	
5	Clarity of battle	
6	Bonus feat	
7	Perfect fortitude, close the wound, battle trance 3/day	
8	See your future	
9	Bonus feat	
10	Perfect mind, protective mind, battle trance 4/day	

trance lasts for a number of rounds equal to 3 + the character's (newly improved) Wisdom modifier. The perfected one may prematurely end the battle trance voluntarily. The perfected one may enter a battle trance once per day at 1st level and one additional time every 3 levels thereafter (4th, 7th, 10th, and so on).

Combat Insight (Su): At 2nd level, whenever the perfected one makes a successful unarmed strike and is wearing no armor, she may add her Wisdom bonus to the damage dealt.

Bonus Feats: The perfected one gets a bonus feat at 3rd level and every 3 levels thereafter (6th, 9th, 12th, and so on). These bonus feats must be selected from the following list: Armor Skin, Blinding Speed, Damage Reduction, Epic Prowess, Epic Toughness, Fast Healing, Fleet of Foot, Improved Combat Reflexes, Keen Strike, Legendary Climber, Legendary Wrestler, Righteous Strike, Shattering Strike, and Vorpal Strike.

Perfect Grace (Ex): By 4th level, the perfected one gains a clarity of insight that allows her to avoid dangers more easily. She may add her Wisdom bonus to Reflex saves while unarmored.

Graceful Movement (Su): Once per day at 4th level, the perfected one's body automatically activates graceful movement when needed (although the perfected one may elect not to use this ability). This ability functions as the *freedom of movement* spell. Using this ability doesn't require an action on the part of the perfected one, and it can even occur on another character's turn if necessary.

Clarity of Battle (Su): Once per day at 5th level, a perfected one may add her Wisdom bonus to her unarmed strike attack rolls for one full round. During this round, she is also treated as having the Improved Combat Reflexes feat, even if she doesn't have the prerequisites for that feat. Clarity of battle only functions if the perfected one is wearing no armor. The perfected one gains one additional use of this ability per day for every 10 levels after 5th gained in this class (15th, 25th, and so on).

Perfect Fortitude (Ex): At 7th level, the perfected one's agility becomes potent enough to resist bodily hazards. As long as the perfected one is unarmored, she may add her Dexterity bonus to Fortitude saves.

Close the Wound (Su): Once per day at 7th level, the perfected one's body automatically activates close the wound on itself if she is reduced to 0 or fewer hit points. This ability doesn't function if the perfected one is reduced to -10 or fewer hit points. Close the wound functions as the *heal* spell. Using this ability doesn't require an action on the part of the perfected one, and it can even occur on another character's turn if necessary.

See Your Future (Su): An 8th-level perfected one has a powerful sixth sense and receives instantaneous warnings of impending danger or harm as per the *foresight* spell. The perfected one gains one additional use of this power per week for every 10 levels of of this class gained above 8th (18th, 28th, and so on), but never more than once per day.

Perfect Mind (Ex): The body and mind of a 10th-level perfected one become fully attuned. As long as she is unarmored, the perfected one may add her Constitution bonus to Will saves.

Protective Mind (Su): Once per day at 10th level, the perfect one's body automatically activates protective mind on itself if the perfected one is the target of any effect that would detect, influence, or read her emotions or thoughts. This ability functions exactly as the *mind blank* spell, except that its duration is only one hour. Using this ability doesn't require an action on the part of the perfected one, and it can even occur on another character's turn if necessary.

Stalwart Warden

The stalwart warden personifies the mettle and endurance of the dwarven race. Despite his short stature, this mighty dwarf stands tall in the defense of his charge, whether that be an individual, a town of innocents, or an entire race. More than one orc warlord has made the mistake of urging his troops on with the statement, "It's only a single dwarf, how can he hope to stop us?"

Fighters, paladins, monks, rangers, and even ex-barbarians all make fine stalwart wardens. Some clerics choose to follow this path, although this is rare since they must forsake improving their spellcasting abilities. Dwarven defenders most often become stalwart wardens and are readily prepared for this class since they've already pledged some level of service or loyalty to the dwarven people. Similarly, the devoted defender (from *Sword and Fist*) can aspire to become a stalwart warden. Arcane spellcasters have little to gain from this class.

A stalwart warden puts the needs of others before his own, although this can take many forms. Some live spartan lifestyles, preferring to avoid personal involvement. Others live as their fellows, reveling in all that life has to offer. Regardless of personality, however, the stalwart warden remains ever vigilant for danger.

Class Features

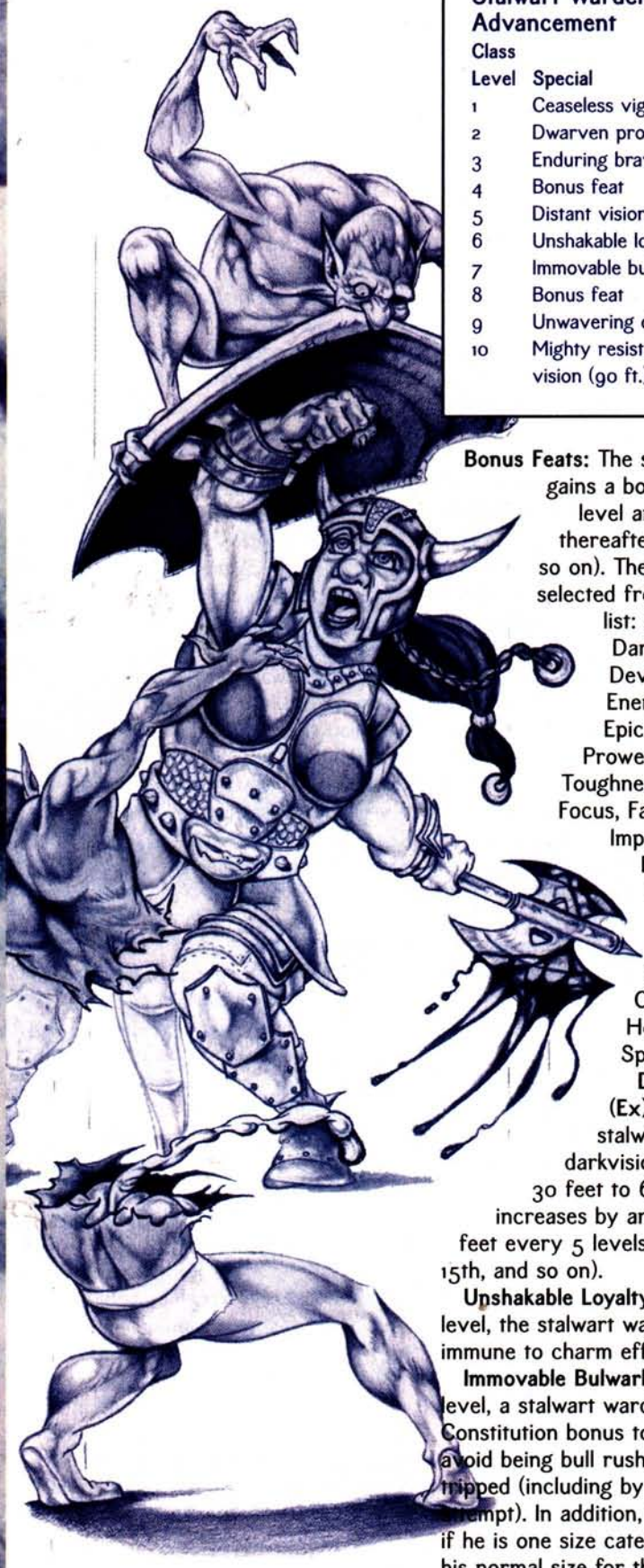
All the following are class features of the stalwart warden prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: The stalwart warden gains proficiency with all simple and martial weapons, with light, medium, and heavy armor, and with shields.

Ceaseless Vigilance (Ex): Beginning at 1st level, the stalwart warden may add his class level as an insight bonus to Listen and Spot checks.

Dwarven Prowess (Ex): At 2nd level, a stalwart warden receives additional training against the traditional foes of his people. His racial bonus to attack rolls against orcs and goblinoids increases to +2, and his dodge bonus against giants increases to +6. In addition, the stalwart warden may add his class level to damage rolls against any of these creatures.

Enduring Bravery (Ex): At 3rd level, the stalwart warden becomes immune to fear effects.



Stalwart Warden Advancement

HIT DIE D12

Class Level	Special
1	Ceaseless vigilance
2	Dwarven prowess
3	Enduring bravery
4	Bonus feat
5	Distant vision (60 ft.)
6	Unshakable loyalty
7	Immovable bulwark
8	Bonus feat
9	Unwavering dedication
10	Mighty resistance, distant vision (90 ft.)

Bonus Feats: The stalwart warden gains a bonus feat at 4th level and every 4 levels thereafter (8th, 12th, and so on). These feats must be selected from the following list: Armor Skin, Damage Reduction, Devastating Critical, Energy Resistance, Epic Endurance, Epic Prowess, Epic Toughness, Epic Weapon Focus, Fast Healing, Improved Combat Reflexes, Improved Darkvision, Instant Reload, Overwhelming Critical, Perfect Health, and Spellcasting Harrier.

Distant Vision (Ex): At 5th level, the stalwart warden's darkvision improves from 30 feet to 60 feet, and increases by an additional 30 feet every 5 levels thereafter (10th, 15th, and so on).

Unshakable Loyalty (Ex): At 6th level, the stalwart warden becomes immune to charm effects.

Immovable Bulwark (Ex): At 7th-level, a stalwart warden may add his Constitution bonus to any check to avoid being bull rushed, grappled, or tripped (including by an overrun attempt). In addition, he is treated a if he is one size category larger than his normal size for the purposes of such checks, and when attempting to resist a bull rush or a trip, the stalwart warden is considered "exceptionally stable."

Unwavering Dedication (Ex): At 9th level, the stalwart warden becomes immune to compulsion effects.

Mighty Resistance (Ex): The stalwart warden's natural dwarven racial bonuses to saves against poison and spells improve from +2 to +4 at 10th level, and thereafter increase by 2 points for every 10 additional levels gained (20th, 30th, and so on).

Stalwart Warden Requirements

To qualify to become a stalwart warden, a character must fulfill all of the following criteria.

Alignment: Lawful good or lawful neutral.

Race: Dwarf.

Base Attack Bonus: +21.

Listen: 10 ranks.

Sense Motive: 5 ranks.

Spot: 10 ranks.

Feats: Alertness, Endurance, Iron Will, Toughness.

Epic Feats: Epic Toughness.

Special: Must have damage reduction from a feat or class feature.

Stalwart Warden Class Skills

The stalwart warden's class skills and the key ability for each skill are:

Str: –

Dex: –

Con: –

Int: Craft (any).

Wis: Listen, Sense Motive, Spot.

Cha: –

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.

Unholy Ravager

The unholy ravager is a walking personification of evil incarnate. He doesn't merely radiate evil, he is evil, and he leaves a trail of devastation behind him. Some lands exist for centuries without seeing such a villain, but for every such fortunate kingdom, there is another brought to utter ruin at the hands of an unholy ravager.

While all unholy ravagers revel in destruction, they pursue this goal in a variety of different ways. Lawful

Unholy Ravager Advancement

HIT DIE D8

Class Level	Special
1	Aura of evil
2	Corrupting touch
3	Sneak attack +1d6
4	Bonus feat
5	Desecrating aura
6	Sneak attack +2d6
7	Defiling glare
8	Bonus feat
9	Sneak attack +3d6
10	Despoiling presence

Unholy Ravager Requirements

To qualify to become an unholy ravager, a character must fulfill all of the following criteria.

Alignment: Any evil.

Base Attack Bonus: +21.

Feats: Power Attack, Sunder, Cleave, Great Cleave, Improved Critical.

Epic Feats: Overwhelming Critical.

Special: Must have dedicated yourself to the service of an evil god.

Unholy Ravager Class Skills

The unholy ravager's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are:

Str: Climb.

Dex: Ride.

Con: —

Int: Intelligence.

Wis: —

Cha: Handle Animal, Intimidate.

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.

unholy ravagers often set themselves up as despots, periodically leaving the palace to lead an army of evil across the land. Neutral unholy ravagers might work behind the scenes until such a time as their presence is necessary to achieve maximum carnage. Chaotic unholy ravagers are especially feared, for there is no negotiating with such a character. These unholy ravagers care little for rulership or backroom dealings, but only in bringing sorrow to the land, often at the head of a rapacious band of murderous thugs who see the unholy ravager as the living hand of their destructive god.

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the unholy ravager prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Characters who take a level of unholy ravager gain proficiency with all simple and martial weapons, with light, medium, and heavy armor, and with shields.

Aura of Evil (Su): The unholy ravager emanates an evil aura that causes all good-aligned characters within 20 feet to suffer a -2 morale penalty to all attacks and skill checks. For the purposes of the *detect evil* spell, the unholy ravager's aura of evil is equal to his character level. Note that the unholy rav-

World Guardian Advancement

Class Level	Special	Spells Per Day
1	World's friend	+1 level of existing class
2	*Speak with the world*	+1 level of existing class
3	Oaken hide +1	+1 level of existing class
4	Bonus feat	+1 level of existing class
5	*Hear the world*	+1 level of existing class
6	Oaken hide +2	+1 level of existing class
7	Strength of stone	+1 level of existing class
8	Bonus feat	+1 level of existing class
9	*Walk the world,* oaken hide +3	+1 level of existing class
10	*Unleash the world's fury*	+1 level of existing class

ager can dampen this aura as a standard action, such as when he wishes to remain unnoticed by good-aligned characters. Restoring his aura of evil is a free action.

Corrupting Touch (Su): An unholy ravager can corrupt a creature or object by touch once per day at 2nd level, and one additional time per day every 10 levels thereafter (12th, 22nd, and so on). Corrupting touch eliminates any damage reduction or hardness possessed by the creature or object for one hour. This ability requires a touch attack if used against a character or an object carried by another character. Corrupting touch allows no saving throw to resist its effects. If used against a single part of a particularly large object (such as a castle wall), corrupting touch affects a 5-foot-cube of material.

Sneak Attack (Ex): Any time the unholy ravager's target would be denied her Dexterity bonus to AC (regardless of whether she has a Dexterity bonus), the unholy ravager's attack deals extra damage. The extra damage is +1d6 at 3rd level and an additional 1d6 every three levels thereafter. In every other way, treat this ability as a rogue's sneak attack. If the unholy ravager already has the sneak attack ability from another source, the bonuses to damage stack.

Bonus Feats: The unholy ravager gets a bonus feat at 4th level and every 4 levels thereafter (8th, 12th, and so on). These bonus feats must be selected from the following list: Armor Skin, Damage Reduction, Devastating Critical, Epic Prowess, Epic Toughness, Epic Weapon Focus, Fast Healing, Improved Sneak Attack, and Lingering Damage.

Desecrating Aura (Su): By 5th level, the unholy ravager's 20-foot aura of evil is so purely evil that it imbues the area with negative energy, as per the *desecrate* spell. If dispelled, the unholy ravager can restore the aura on his turn as a free action.

Defiling Glare (Su): An unholy ravager can place a curse upon a target within 30 feet with only a glance. He may use this ability once per day at 7th level, and one additional time per day every 10 levels thereafter (17th, 27th, and so on). This ability works exactly as the *bestow curse* spell, except that its effects can only be removed by a spellcaster of at least 21st level.

Despoiling Presence (Su): At 10th level, the unholy ravager's aura of evil renders any food or water within its area poisonous to consume (Fortitude save DC 20 + class level + Charisma modifier to resist; initial and secondary damage 1d10 Constitution). Potions and similar magic liquids can also be affected, although such items are allowed a Will save (DC 20) to resist. Any items carried by the unholy ravager are unaffected.

World Guardian

Some might describe the world guardian as an avatar of nature. Others see her as the personification of the environment, an animate extension of its needs. In actuality, the world guardian is simply an individual dedicated to defending the world of beast, tree, sun, and sky, from callous destruction at the hands of those who cannot or will not respect its terrible beauty.

Druids are the most logical world guardians, with their innate respect for the natural world. However, some rangers also take up the cause, and in rare cases a barbarian or multiclassed barbarian/ranger might heed the call as well. Other characters simply don't have the training and knowledge required to become world guardians.

The world guardian bears a heavy burden—the protection of her natural environment from those who would despoil it. Some world guardians grow aloof, standing apart from those who do not share the weight of the beliefs of this class. Others solicit allies, both from nature and from civilization as needed. In cases where local rulers share similar outlooks, the world guardian can provide simultaneous protection to nature and kingdom alike. But in territories controlled by those who do not respect her charge, the world guardian might turn to lawless anarchy to protect the land.

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the world guardian prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: The world guardian gains no new proficiency in armor or weapons.

Spellcasting: At every level, the world guardian gains new spells per day and spells known as if she had also gained a level in a spellcasting class to which she belonged before adding the prestige class. She does not, however, gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained (such as bonus metamagic or item creation feats). If already an epic spellcaster, the character gains only the benefit noted under the Spells entry for that epic class. If the character possessed more than one spellcasting class before she became a world guardian, she must decide which class will receive the additional spellcasting level for purposes of determining spells per day when she adds the new level.

World's Friend (Ex): No animal, beast, or plant willingly harms or opposes a world guardian. Any spell or effect that would cause an animal, beast, or plant to act against the world guardian (such as *entangle*) automatically fails. If the world guardian

For Your Campaign

Just as with mundane prestige classes, your choice to include epic prestige classes in your campaign should be guided by the roles they will fit. Don't simply add all the prestige classes presented in this article to your game without considering the ramifications of their inclusion. If possible, include hints to their existence well before the characters seek to qualify for them. This might come in the form of meeting others of those classes or, if your PCs are the first epic-level characters in your campaign, providing omens or signs that the characters are "destined" for certain paths of power.

Although the requirements for each of the prestige classes presented here are largely statistic-oriented, you can make these classes even more special and elite by adding campaign-specific requirements that characters must fulfill to qualify. For instance, you might decide that in your game, all world guardians are specially selected by the goddess of nature or that a character seeking to become an arcane lord must first visit the Wellspring of All Magic. Requirements such as these help make a prestige class feel more a part of your world, rather than just an artificial addition.

World Guardian Requirements

To qualify to become a world guardian, a character must fulfill all of the following criteria.

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Alignment: Any non-evil.

Knowledge (nature): 24 ranks.

Wilderness Lore: 24 ranks.

Feats: Skill Focus (Knowledge [nature]) or Skill Focus (Wilderness Lore).

Epic Feats: Epic Skill Focus (Knowledge [nature]) or Epic Skill Focus (Wilderness Lore), Extended Lifespan.

Special: Character may substitute the timeless body class feature from the monk class for the Extended Lifespan epic feat requirement.

World Guardian Class Skills

The world guardian's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are:

Str: Swim.

Dex: Hide, Move Silently.

Con: Concentration.

Int: Craft (any), Knowledge (nature), Profession (any), Scry (exclusive skill), Spellcraft.

Wis: Heal, Intuit Direction, Listen, Spot, Wilderness Lore.

Cha: Animal Empathy (exclusive skill), Diplomacy, Handle Animal.

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier.

attacks such a creature, the stricture is broken.

At 6th level, this ability grants any animal, beast, or plant fighting as an ally of the world guardian a +4 morale bonus to attacks and damage. The world guardian must be within 100 feet and have line of sight to the animal, beast, or plant.

Speak with the World (Sp): A 2nd-level world guardian may *speak with animals* or *speak with plants* at will. She may also cast *stone tell* once per day, plus one additional time per day every 10 levels thereafter (12th, 22nd, and so on). These powers function as a spellcaster of the world guardian's character level.

Oaken Hide (Su): Beginning at 3rd level, the world guardian develops a natural armor bonus. This bonus is +1 at 3rd level and increases by an additional +1 every three levels thereafter (+2 at 6th, +3 at 9th, and so on).

Bonus Feats: The world guardian gains a bonus feat at 4th level and every 4 levels thereafter (8th, 12th, and so on). These bonus feats must be selected from the following list: Blinding Speed, Energy Resistance, Epic Endurance, Fast Healing, Fleet of Foot, Legendary Climber, Legendary Tracker, Perfect Health, Permanent Emanation, and Spontaneous Spell.

Hear the World (Sp): At 5th level, the world guardian can cast *commune with nature* once per day as a spellcaster of her character level. The world guardian gains one additional use of this ability per day for every 10 levels gained above 5th (15th, 25th, and so on).

Strength of Stone (Sp): Once per day, the world guardian may cast *stoneskin* upon herself as a caster of her class level. The world guardian gains one additional use of this ability per day for every 10 levels gained above 7th (17th, 27th, and so on).

Walk the World (Sp): At 9th-level, the world guardian may cast *transport via plants* at will.

Unleash the World's Fury (Sp): At 10th level, the world guardian may, once per week, unleash the unfettered fury of nature. This requires one round of concentration and takes the form of any one of the following spell effects cast at a level equal to the world guardian's character level: *creeping doom, earthquake, storm of vengeance,* or *whirlwind.*

The world guardian and her allies are unaffected by the effect. This power only functions on the Material Plane. D

CHILDREN OF THE COSMOS

8 NEW Planetouched Races

by Travis Stout • illustrated by Todd Harris

Throughout the multiverse, a vast number of planes embody the forces of good and evil, law and chaos, and other primordial forces. At the heart of these planes lies the Material Plane, where most campaigns take place. Outsiders of every stripe roam this plane, and many interact with the Material Plane's native inhabitants. Although it's uncommon, some of these interactions produce children, and those children produce children. Outsider blood is powerful, and its influence can last through several generations, bestowing its special gifts upon the outsider's descendants. These descendants are referred to as planetouched, and they are a breed apart from the other inhabitants of the planes. This article presents six new planetouched for you to add to your campaign: axani, cansin, and four new para-elemental genasi.

ORDER AND ENTROPY

When someone mentions the planetouched, the first beings that come to mind are aasimar and tieflings, the descendants of celestials and fiends, respectively. Strongly tied to their respective alignments, aasimar and tieflings, for better or for worse, are encountered more frequently than other planetouched.

Good and evil comprise only one axis of alignment. Law and chaos are equally powerful and compelling forces, and there are a number of outsiders that embody these forces just as celestials and fiends embody good and evil. Planetouched descended from lawful or chaotic outsiders are called axani and cansin, respectively. Axani have the blood of lawful outsiders coursing through their veins, most often a lawful neutral outsider like a mercane or an axiomatic humanoid (described in *Manual of the Planes*), but sometimes a lawful celestial (such as an archon) or fiend (such as a devil) produces an axani descendant. This happens most often when most of the axani's mortal ancestors are strongly opposed to the good or evil component of the outsider's alignment. Cansin, on the other hand, are descended from chaotic outsiders, like slaadi or chaos beasts. Such instances are rare, and the fact that they happen at all highlights the nature of chaos itself. Like axani, however, sometimes a chaotic celestial (such as an eladrin) or fiend (such as a demon) spawns cansin descendants instead of, or in addition to, aasimar and tieflings.

Axani

Axani typically have overly neat, orderly appearances. They favor simple but elegant clothing and hairstyles. They are often quite attractive, with well-formed, symmetrical features. Some axani have a metallic tint to their skin or hair, but this is rare. Like elves, Axani have no facial or body hair. As their lineage indicates, most are lawful neutral, with lawful good and lawful evil as roughly equal minorities. Neutral axani are extremely rare, and chaotic axani are almost unheard of. Axani are drawn to the ordered, principled life of the monk, but any profession with a structured environment, such as soldiering, suits them.

Racial Abilities: Axani have the following traits:

- +2 Int, +2 Wis: Axani are logical and calculating, but tend to be cold and emotionless.
- Medium-size.
- Axani base speed is 30 feet.
- Cold and sonic resistance 5.
- *Calm Emotions (Sp):* Axani can cast the *calm emotions* spell once per day as a cleric of their character level.
- +2 racial bonus to Diplomacy and Spot checks: Axani are good at arguing their points logically, and they are perceptive to disturbances in their environment.
- Darkvision up to 60 feet.
- Outsider: Axani are native outsiders.
- Automatic Languages: Common, home region (if playing in a setting that has regions). Bonus Languages: Any (except secret languages, like Druidic).
- Favored Class: Monk.
- Level Adjustment +1: Axani are slightly more powerful and gain levels more slowly than most other common races.

Cansin

Children of randomness and entropy, cansin are most often descended from the inhabitants of Limbo, the plane of chaos. Cansin generally appear disheveled and disorganized. Their clothing is mismatched, their hair is mussed, and their caps perch at odd angles. Cansin typically have at least one, but possibly several, minor physical traits that reflect their origins. Some have eyes that randomly change color (not necessarily in sync), others have slightly irregular features, and still others carry around an aura of randomness that causes strange things to happen in the cansin's presence. This aura does not affect dice rolls in any way, of course, but it can affect insignificant events such as chance meetings, minor accidents, and strange but harmless occurances. Naturally, most cansin are

For Your Character

Playing a new race often means playing a new character. However, there are a few general ways that you can incorporate these new races into a campaign without changing characters.

Take a Cohort: If you are high enough level to qualify for the Leadership feat, you can, with your DM's permission, take a planetouched cohort.

Manifest Late: With your DM's permission, you can manifest the racial powers of one of these races instead of gaining a level. This takes into account the level adjustment and can serve as an interesting way to represent a character's discovery of her heritage.

Prestige Path: Design a short (3- to 5-level) prestige class that represents a growing connection to the appropriate plane. The class could give many of the same abilities that a planetouched character gains. Although this option requires some design work, it can work in nearly any campaign.

Familial Connection: Although your character does not share the planetouched traits, perhaps other members of your family do. You won't be able to access the racial abilities of the planetouched, but many of the same interesting roleplaying opportunities become available.

Reincarnation: Although it's a bit unorthodox, your DM might allow you to return as a planetouched character after being reincarnated. Of course, this option has a rather harsh prerequisite.

For Your Campaign

Including new planetouched races in your campaign is easy. If a race is represented by a single individual or small family, the creature can be present with little or no explanation. If the planetouched form a larger group or role, several origin stories are possible:

- An ancient civilization, long since destroyed, built planar gateways for some forgotten purpose. Although their task is forgotten, the planetouched remain as a testament to their power.
- Bred as servants, a group of para-genasi serve an evil elemental savant or conjurer. Axani bred from summoned fiends and captive humanoids might also appear in this tyrant's service.
- Instead of direct mating, powerful elemental gateways taint the bloodlines of nearby creatures through magical means, transforming many of the region's current inhabitants to genasi and para-genasi. Creatures with the elemental templates from the *Manual of the Planes* suddenly appear in the region as well.

chaotic, but their very unpredictability makes neutral and even lawful cansin more common than good tieflings, evil aasimar, or chaotic axani.

Racial Abilities: Cansin have the following traits:

- +2 Int, +2 Cha: Cansin are flamboyant and vivacious, capable of stunning leaps of deductive reasoning, and others often find their impulsiveness intriguing.
- Medium-size.
- Cansin base speed is 30 feet.
- Acid and fire resistance 5.
- *Entropic Shield (Sp):* Cansin can cast *entropic shield* once per day as a cleric of their character level.
- +2 racial bonus to Bluff and Search checks: Cansin are good at coming up with involved fabrications on the spot, and they often find what they are looking for by chance.
- Darkvision up to 60 feet.
- Outsider: Cansin are native outsiders.
- Automatic Languages: Common, home region (if playing in a setting that has regions). Bonus Languages: Any (except secret languages, like Druidic).
- Favored Class: Sorcerer.
- Level Adjustment +1: Cansin are slightly more powerful and gain levels more slowly than most other common races.

PARA-GENASI

By far the most common breeds of genasi are those descended from the four primary elements of air, earth, fire, and water. Slightly less common are para-genasi descended from the mixed blood of two types of elemental outsiders. For example, if the daughter of a mortal and an efreeti has a child with a djinni, that child's descendants might include smoke para-genasi as well as fire and air genasi. Because such unions are less common than those that create the standard genasi, however, para-genasi are comparatively rarer than the four genasi described in the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting* book and *Dragon Magazine* issue #293.

Dust Para-Genasi

Dust para-genasi tend to be morbid and sarcastic. They are most often neutral, but many of them have a slightly chaotic bent. They are pale and gaunt, with hollow cheeks and dark circles under their eyes. They usually have at least one or two traits that hint at their ancestry, such as perpetually dry skin or a cloud of dust that clings to them wherever they go. They almost always dress in black, and more often than not they wear funeral garb, even when such garb would be highly inappropriate.

Racial Abilities: Dust para-genasi have the following traits:

- +4 Dex, +2 Int, -2 Con, -2 Cha: Dust para-genasi are surprisingly nimble and sharp, but they are often sickly, and their morbid fascination with death and decay is off-putting.
- Medium-size.
- Dust para-genasi base speed is 30 feet.
- +1 racial bonus on saving throws against dust spells and effects (such as *dust of dryness* or a dust mephit's breath weapon). This bonus increases by +1 for every five character levels the para-genasi attains.
- Dust Cloud (Su): Once per day, a dust para-genasi can create a 20-foot radius cloud of dust, centered on himself. This cloud grants one quarter concealment (10% miss chance) to any creature more than 5 feet away from another within the cloud, and all creatures except the dust para-genasi must make a Fortitude save (DC 10 + 1/2 level + Charisma modifier) or begin coughing uncontrollably. This coughing imposes a -2 penalty to attacks and skill checks, and it lasts until the victim leaves the cloud. The dust cloud lasts for 5 minutes.
- Breathless (Ex): Dust para-genasi do not breathe, so they are immune to drowning, suffocation, and attacks that require inhalation (such as some types of poison).
- Clerical Focus: A dust para-genasi cleric must choose a deity who grants access to either the Air or Earth domains and must choose either Air or Earth as one of his two domains.
- Outsider: Dust para-genasi are native outsiders.
- Automatic Languages: Common, home region (if playing in a setting that has regions). Bonus Languages: Any (excluding secret languages, like Druidic).
- Favored Class: Rogue.
- Level Adjustment +1: Dust para-genasi are slightly more powerful and gain levels more slowly than most other common races.

Ice Para-Genasi

Ice para-genasi are cold, emotionless beings. Like most genasi, they tend toward neutrality. They appear human, but their features are often sharper and more chiseled than normal, and their skin is paler than the norm for their race. In addition, they have one or two minor supernatural traits that hint at their heritage, such as breath that frosts in even the hottest weather or frost-caked hair. They prefer loose, light clothing in whites and pale blues, even in cool climates.

Racial Abilities: Ice para-genasi have the following traits:

- +4 Con, +2 Wis, -2 Dex, -2 Cha: Ice para-genasi are hearty and observant, but they are sluggish and often seem uncaring.
- Medium-size.
- Ice para-genasi base speed is 30 feet.

• +1 racial bonus on saving throws against cold effects. This bonus increases by +1 for every five character levels the para-genasi attains.

• Darkvision up to 60 ft.

• *Chill Metal (Sp):* Ice genasi can use *chill metal* once per day as a druid of their character level.

• Clerical Focus: An ice para-genasi cleric must choose a deity who grants the Air or Water domain and must select either Air or Water as one of her two domains.

• Outsider: Ice para-genasi are native outsiders.

• Automatic Languages: Common, home region (if playing in a setting that has regions). Bonus Languages: Any (except secret languages, like Druidic).

• Favored Class: Fighter.

• Level Adjustment +1: Ice para-genasi are slightly more powerful and gain levels more slowly than most other common races.

Magma Para-Genasi

Ponderous but powerful, magma para-genasi combine many of the traits of their earthen and fiery ancestors. Like all para-genasi, they tend toward neutrality. They are usually short and stocky, sometimes to the point of resembling tall dwarves. They usually have dark skin, and they typically possess traits that mark them as unusual. They might have a reddish glow to their skin or eyes, feel unusually hot to the touch, or have hair that ripples like fire. They tend toward simple, utilitarian clothes, which often seem disturbingly close to smoldering.

Racial Abilities: Magma para-genasi have the following traits:

• +2 Con, +2 Str, -2 Int, -2 Wis: Magma para-genasi are strong and tough, but they think slowly and uncertainly.

• Medium-size.

• Magma para-genasi base speed is 30 feet.

• +1 racial bonus to saving throws against fire spells and effects. This bonus increases by +1 for every five character levels the para-genasi attains.

• Darkvision up to 60 ft.

• *Heat Metal (Sp):* Once per day, magma para-genasi can cast *heat metal* as a sorcerer of their character level.

• Cleric Focus: A magma para-genasi cleric must choose a deity who grants access to the Earth or Fire domains and must choose Earth or Fire as one of his domains.

• Outsider: Magma para-genasi are native outsiders.

• Automatic Languages: Common, home region (if playing in a setting that has regions). Bonus Languages: Any (except secret languages, like Druidic).

• Favored Class: Fighter.

• Level Adjustment +1: Magma para-genasi are slightly more powerful and gain levels more slowly than most other common races.

Ooze Para-Genasi

Ooze para-genasi are repulsive and slimy (both physically and in personality). They are most often neutral, but they have a slight tendency toward evil. They are usually heavyset, with flabby bodies and sallow skin. Most exhibit a small number of traits that hint at their ancestry, such as greasy skin or unusually flexible limbs. They wear dark earth tones, and their clothing is often soiled and foul smelling. They are, on a whole, utterly revolting.

Racial Abilities: Ooze para-genasi have the following traits:

• +4 Con, -2 Cha: Ooze para-genasi are hardy and resilient, but many other races find them repulsive.

• Medium-size.

• Ooze para-genasi base speed is 30 feet.

• Darkvision up to 60 feet.

• +1 racial bonus on saving throws against acid spells and effects. This bonus increases by +1 for every five character levels the genasi attains.

• *Grease (Sp):* Ooze para-genasi can use *grease* once per day as a sorcerer of their character level.

• Clerical Focus: If using the domains in the FORGOTTEN REALMS setting, an ooze para-genasi cleric must choose a deity who grants access to the Slime domain and choose Slime as one of his two domains. If the FORGOTTEN REALMS domains are not used, ooze para-genasi must choose a deity who grants access to either the Earth or Water domains and choose Earth or Water as one of his domains.

• Outsider: Ooze para-genasi are native outsiders.

• Automatic Languages: Common, home region (if playing in a setting that has regions). Bonus Languages: Any (except secret languages, like Druidic).

• Favored Class: Fighter.

• Level Adjustment +1: Ooze para-genasi are slightly more powerful and gain levels more slowly than most other common races.

Smoke Para-Genasi

Smoke para-genasi seem crude and lazy. They tend toward neutrality, like all genasi and most elementals. Smoke para-genasi are tall and lanky, reflecting their heritage of air and fire. They tend to have dark skin and hair, and like other genasi have one or two unusual traits, such as hair that billows like clouds of smoke or the faint whiff of something burning clinging to them. They prefer loose clothing in dark colors and heavy fabrics.

Racial Abilities: Smoke para-genasi have the following traits:

• +2 Dex, +2 Int, -2 Cha: Smoke para-genasi are naturally quick and intelligent but are often unpleasant.

• Medium-size.

• Smoke para-genasi base speed is 30 feet.

• +1 racial bonus on saving throws against smoke and cloud-type effects (such as *stinking cloud* and *cloudkill*). This bonus increases by +5 for every five character levels the para-genasi attains.

• Darkvision up to 60 ft.

• Smoke Cloud (Su): Smoke para-genasi can create a smoke cloud once per day. This ability functions exactly like the effect of the *pyrotechnics* spell of the same name, except that the smoke para-genasi does not require an open flame to use it. The para-genasi uses this ability as a sorcerer of his character level.

• Clerical Focus: A smoke para-genasi cleric must choose a deity who grants access to the Air or Fire domains and must choose Air or Fire as one of his two domains.

• Outsider: Smoke para-genasi are native outsiders.

• Automatic Languages: Common, home region (if playing in a setting that has regions). Bonus Languages: Any (except secret languages, like Druidic).

• Favored Class: Wizard.

• Level Adjustment +1: Smoke para-genasi are slightly more powerful and gain levels more slowly than most other common races.

Steam Para-Genasi

Bossy and egotistical, steam para-genasi often see themselves as inherently superior to other creatures, including other para-genasi. They tend toward neutrality, like their elemental forefathers. Steam para-genasi are usually tall and slim, and often weigh less than their appearance suggests. Like other para-genasi, they have one or two unusual traits, such as wisps of mist constantly clinging to them or a grey tone to their skin or hair. Their clothing is usually loose, flowing, and gauzy.

Racial Abilities: Steam para-genasi have the following traits:

• +2 Dex, -2 Cha: Steam para-genasi are nimble and quick, but they tend to be bossy and have oversized egos.

• Medium-size.

• Steam para-genasi base speed is 30 feet.

• +1 racial bonus on saving throws against heat-based (but not fire-based) spells and effects, such as *heat metal* or a magmin's fiery aura. This bonus increases by +1 for every five character levels the para-genasi attains.

• Darkvision up to 60 ft.

• *Obscuring Mist (Sp):* Once per day, a steam para-genasi can cast *obscuring mist* as a druid of her character level.

• Keen Eyed (Ex): Steam para-genasi can see through smoke, fog, and other atmospheric effects unusually well. Reduce the miss chance caused by concealment by 10% when the target's concealment results from such atmospheric disturbances.

• Clerical Focus: Steam para-genasi clerics must choose a deity who grants access to the Fire or Water domains and must choose Fire or Water as one of her two domains.

• Outsider: Steam para-genasi are native outsiders.

• Automatic Languages: Common, home region (if playing in a setting that has regions). Bonus Languages: Any (except secret languages, like Druidic).

• Favored Class: Rogue.

• Level Adjustment +1: Steam para-genasi are slightly more powerful and gain levels more slowly than most other common races.

Other Planetouched

While the eight new planetouched presented here expand upon the themes presented by aasimar, tieflings, and genasi, this is by no means an exhaustive list of planetouched races. There are countless planes of existence, many outlined in *Manual of the Planes*, any of which could form the basis for new kinds of planetouched. DMs might wish to use these planetouched as a starting point to design such outlandish creatures as positars, with ancestry tracing back to the Positive Energy Plane, or tenebrians, with a distant relative from the Demiplane of Shadow. When you are dealing with outsiders and their kin, the only limit is your imagination—and sometimes not even that! D

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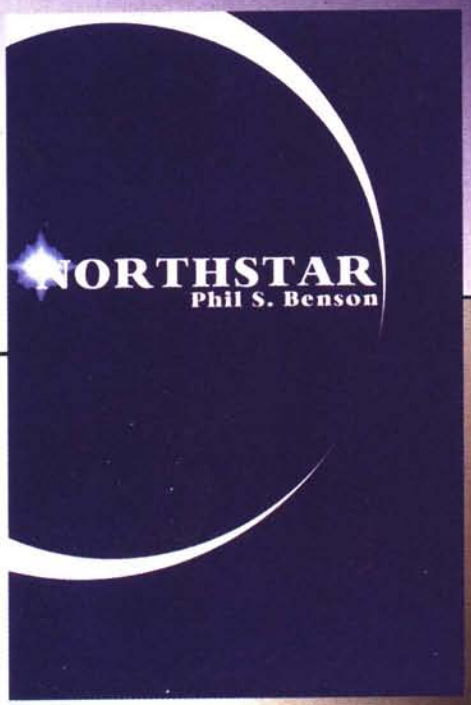
an exiled noble must stand alone
against even his own soul's desires before
the night swallows all he holds dear...



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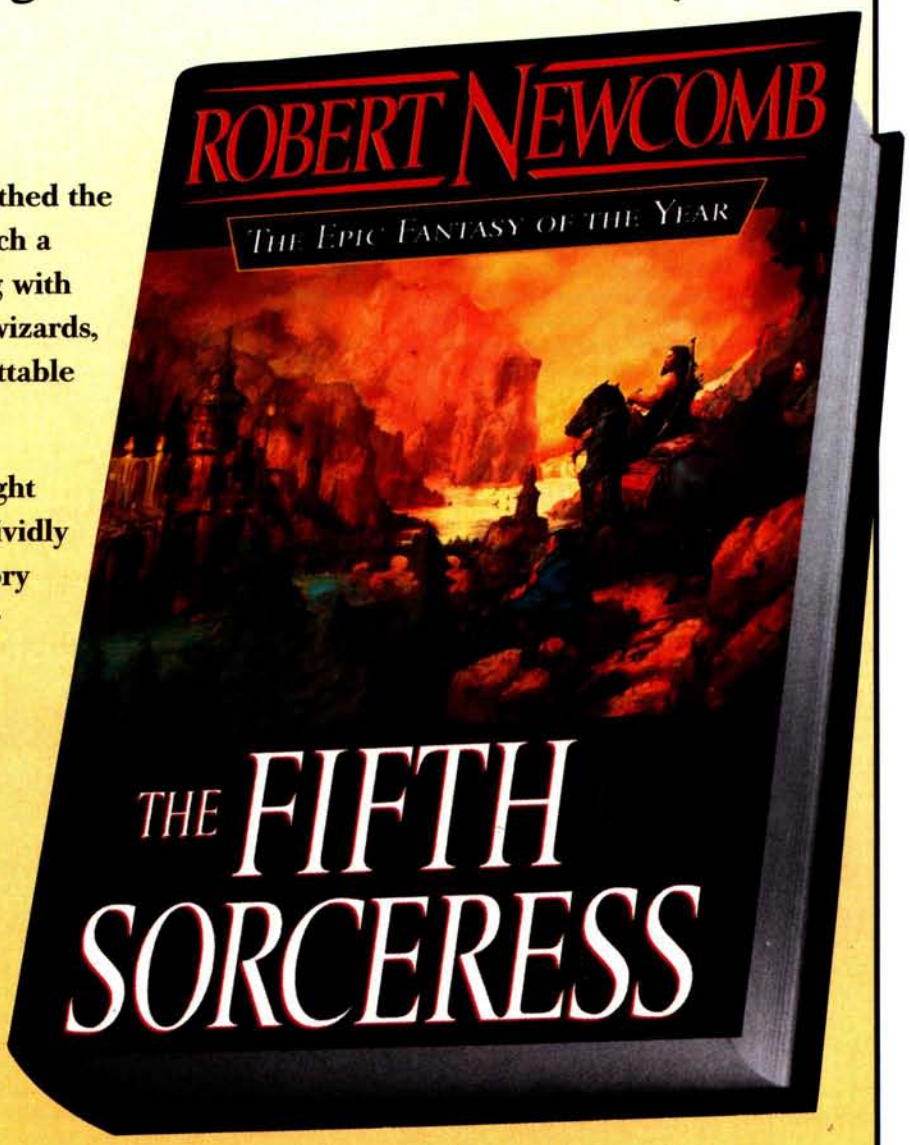

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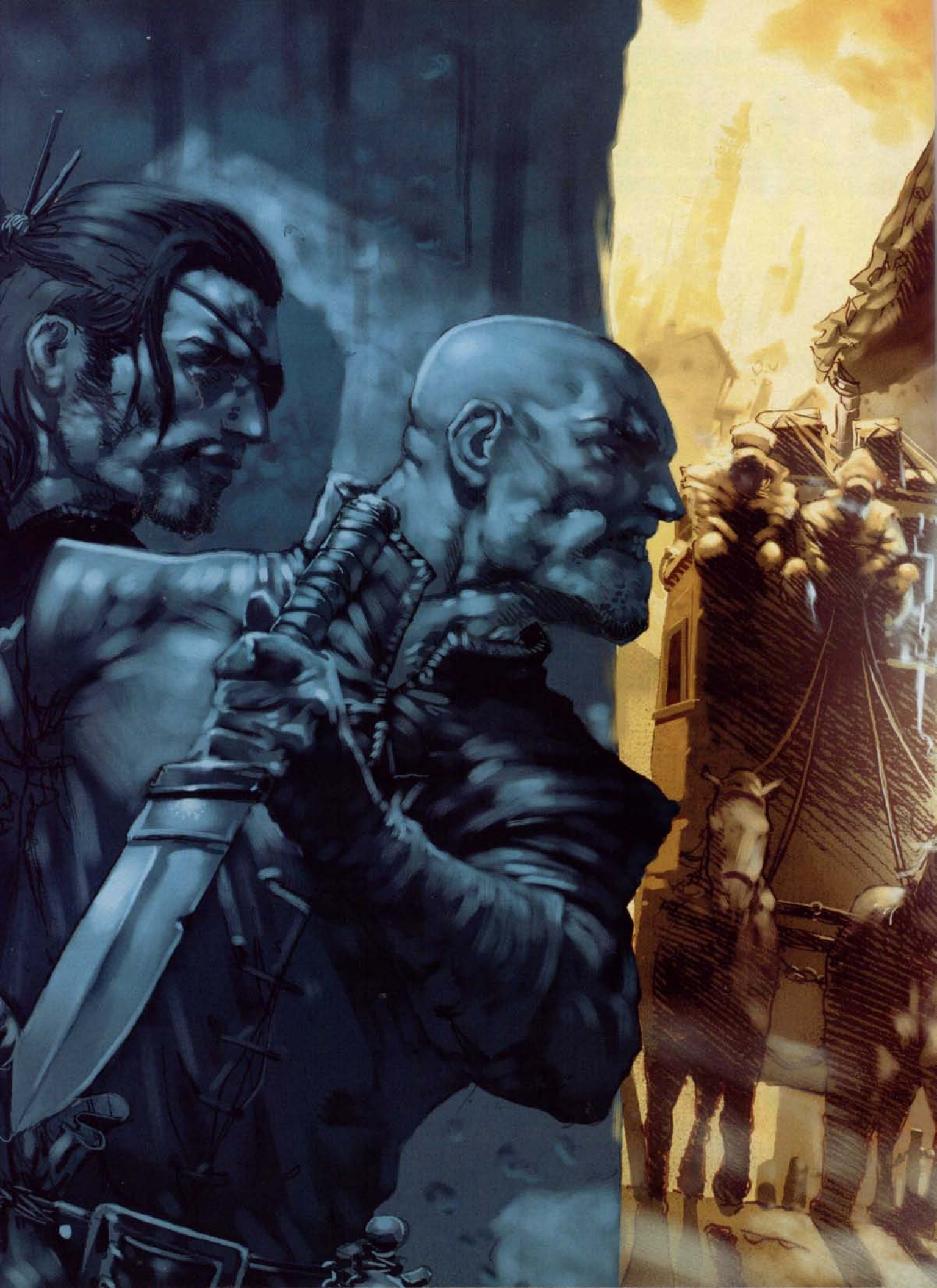


AND ALL THE SINNERS Saints

by Paul Kemp • Illistration by Greg Staples

Cale awoke to a darkened room, the voice of his god dancing tiptoe across the surface of his still sleep-slowed brain. He lay in bed with his eyes open, sweating. After a few heartbeats, his vision began to adjust to the thin beams of Selûne's light filtering through his shuttered window. Furniture took shape in the darkness, gray forms whose familiarity helped bring calm: his sitting chair, dressing table, and reading lamp. He was still at home in the Halls of Stormweather. Not . . . elsewhere.

For the last tenday or so, Mask had invaded his dreams, showed him alien landscapes, dark and windswept, and whispered hauntingly in Cale's ears. In the strange, twilight moments between sleep and full wakefulness, the Shadowlord spoke to him words of power. Prayers, Cale knew. Magical incantations. While he remembered only hazy echoes of the visions shown him by Mask, the Shadowlord's words he remembered with precise clarity, as though they had been etched into his consciousness.

His consciousness? He almost laughed aloud. Since accepting the Call of Mask, he had become less and less certain of where his consciousness ended and that of Mask began. His recent dreams only served to make the distinction still more uncertain.

You can serve and still be your own man, he reminded himself. Jak Fleet, Cale's friend and a priest himself, had told him as much. Still, Cale felt unsure. Serving Mask seemed different than Jak's service to Brandobaris. Mask seemed to want more than mere service; Cale felt an agenda. Had Mask called him to serve some greater purpose?

He stared at the dark ceiling. "Is that what this is about?" he asked aloud.

Mask, of course, made no answer.

Cale, however, knew now how he might encourage an answer from the Shadowlord; his dreams had provided him a way.

MASK HAD INVADED HIS DREAMS, SHOWED HIM ALIEN LANDSCAPES, WHISPERED HAUNTINGLY IN CALE'S EARS.

He lay still for a time, thinking, debating. Finally, he came to a decision. He was tired of the disembodied words, the cryptic nonsense. He was a priest, true, but he need not passively accept Mask's piecemeal revelations. With a single spell, he could commune with his god directly and perhaps–perhaps–gain a clearer picture of Mask's purpose.

And whether or not I agree with it, Cale thought.

His mind made up, he leaned over to the small table beside his bed and reignited his reading lantern from the night wick. Its soft orange flame sent shadows dancing across the walls. He took his holy symbol–the soft, black mask he had taken from the Night Knives' guildhouse–from the secret compartment in his night table drawer and sat up in bed. The words of the commune spell filled his mind.

He rose, walked to his cushioned reading chair, and sat. No better place to be when he met his god, he supposed.

His mouth felt dry; his palms clammy. He stared into the lantern's flame, trying to calm himself. He took a deep breath and focused. When he felt he had a firm grip on himself, he held the soft velvet of the mask between thumb and forefinger and began to recite the prayer.

The moment he began to mouth the power-laden words, shadows peeled from the walls and swarmed around him, encapsulating him in a shroud of darkness. He felt motion upward, as though his soul had separated from his body and taken flight. A roar, like rushing water, filled his ears. He gritted his teeth and spoke the final words to the invocation. The roar grew

in intensity. Without warning, his consciousness shot upward with the speed of a shooting star.

Sudden silence. Darkness. A void. Then . . .

He sensed the presence of Mask, an overpowering darkness, a seductive malice. He saw an outline framed against the void. A slim figure: a man.

He wanted to ask questions and demand answers, but no words came. At least not from him.

Observe, said a voice in his head. Cale heard a threat in that voice—and a smile, a wry smile. The outlined figure of Mask bled into the darkness and became indistinguishable. Cale stood alone in the void.

An expanse took shape before him: buildings, towers, walls, lights—Selgaunt in miniature. Cale towered over it. In the sky above shone . . . not Selûne, but a grinning skull surrounded by tears, the symbol of Cyric the Dark Sun. On the other side of the city, towering over it as Cale did, stood a man cloaked in purple. He seemed not to notice Cale but eyed the city greedily. The light from the skull-moon cast his smooth, narrow face in a sinister light. Cale had never seen him before, but instinctively knew him to be an enemy. Hovering over the man was a twisted ivory rod, the length of a man's forearm. It moved as though waved by an invisible hand, and buildings collapsed into rubble.

Cale knew what that rod represented—power and danger to Selgaunt.

The rod is to be your symbol, said the voice in his head. *After you have rooted out its evil and slain its bearer.*

Cale started to protest. He was no assassin, not anymore, but he kept his mouth shut. How could he try to lie to his god? Mask knew him, knew who and what he was, which is why the Shadowlord had Called him.

"Is this my—" He stopped in mid-sentence to correct himself. "Your purpose?"

Look closer. See your purpose. Or part of it.

Cale peered more closely at the man. Behind him stood a darkness, an area of deeper shadow shaped vaguely like a man. Two eyes formed in the darkness, fixed on Cale. Cale stared more closely . . . and found himself staring into the flame of his lamp.

"Dark," he oathed. It took him a few minutes to regain his bearings. *What in the Nine Hells had just happened? More cryptic nonsense.* But then, what had he expected? *A face-to-face with the Shadowlord? A chat over an ale maybe?* He smiled at the thought.

No, he had seen what he had seen. And now he could act on it, or ignore it.

Mulling the choice, he climbed to his feet, blew out the lantern, and climbed back into bed. Whether he decided to pursue Mask's geas or not, he knew he needed to be well rested. Tomorrow he and Thamalon were to attend a small reception at the Hulorn's Palace. All the key players of the Old Chauncel would be there, as would the Hulorn and his idiotic eccentricities. Cale would need his wits about him.

ITS POWER CAN BE YOURS, SAID THE VOICE, SOFTLY. IF YOU BUT SWEAR YOURSELF TO ME.

Riven knew he was dreaming. He tried to wake himself by force of will, but could not.

He hovered high in the air over Selgaunt. Night cloaked the city, and the street torches sparkled in the darkness. Strangely, the streets were devoid of traffic.

From near the Hulorn's palace, furtive motion drew his eye. Riven willed himself to move. Slowly, he floated toward the ornate, gilded palace of Selgaunt's ruling dolt. Far below him, he saw a thin, rat-faced man in purple robes. In his hand, the man held a twisted black staff. Riven sensed its power and craved it.

It is powerful, said a voice from nowhere. His own voice?

The man waved the staff before the walls of the palace and a ripple ran through the structure. Smiling, the man reached down and lifted the corner of the building as though it were a carpet. The palace lay bare, exposed. A bronze holy symbol on a thin chain escaped the man's robes as he bent to enter—a grinning skull surrounded by tears. The symbol of Cyric the Mad, Riven knew.

The man, holding a corner of the Hulorn's palace in one hand and the staff of power in the other, peered nervously around, alert for danger. Riven memorized his face before he wormed his way under the palace and vanished from sight.

Riven wanted that staff. With it, he could start his own organization. Not big, not obvious, but a small guild of highly skilled professional killers.

Its power can be yours, said the voice, softly. *If you but swear yourself to me.*

Riven began to suspect then who it was who had invaded his dreams.

"Who are you?"

Laughter. Below him, Selgaunt vanished, replaced by a swirl of shadows backlit by stars. Up became down, and a pair of eyes stared out of those shadows—youthful but knowing, piercing. Riven could hear the smile in the voice.

You know who I am.

He did. At least he thought he did. He knew that his rival Cale had somehow turned to Mask and become a priest. Riven had reason to suspect that Mask had reached out to him as well, but he had resisted. Since then, he had taken the time to rethink his views. The last time he and Cale had fought, Cale had cast a spell to defeat him. Being a priest gave Cale an edge.

Cale had enough edges.

The eyes pierced him. Shadows swirled.

Swear, the voice prodded.

It took Riven only a heartbeat to decide. If Mask promised power, Riven would take it—on his terms.

"If you think I'm priest material," Riven said. "You're dead wrong."

The eyes suggested a grin. *I know exactly what you are.*

Riven gave a nod. "Then I—" He found himself staring upward at the dark ceiling of his room. "—Swear," he finished, momentarily confused. Torch light from one of the street lamps on Larawkan Lane filtered through the

shutter slats. Shadows filled his spartanly furnished flat.

He threw the blanket from his body and sat up. The dream remained vivid in his memory. He had sworn himself to a god. Or had he? He reached for his weapons belt hanging from the headboard of his bed and withdrew one of his magical sabres. Its weight felt good in his hand. Real. Unlike the unreality of the dream. Metal was Riven's god—in the form of coins and blades.

He chuckled while he dressed. He didn't need a god; he needed a drink and a woman. He had enough fivestars to keep him in both for the rest of the night.

"What a bunch of horse dung," he said aloud, and threw on his trademark scarlet cloak. He hadn't sworn to anything. It was his dream, and his dream was his own; he served no man or god, except on his terms. Anything else was weakness.

He pulled on his cloak. Motion caught his eye. A black piece of cloth fluttered to the floor from an inner pocket. A chill ran up the nape of his neck. He stared at the cloth for a long second before his mind registered what it was. A mask: a black mask. He had never seen it before.

"Son of a whore," he muttered.

Paintings of malformed, hybrid creatures decorated the wood-paneled walls of the reception hall in the Hulorn's palace. Perytons, owlbears, and chimerae glared from the walls and snarled with lifelike ferocity. Expensive carpets depicting similar creatures covered the floor. Tapestries draped the front of the balconies that overlooked the hall from high on three of the four walls. Cale scowled when he considered the amount of coin squandered by Selgaunt's idiotic ruler on artists and trinkets. Cale had taken less coin to kill men, years and years ago.

In the center of the carpeted hall stood three long, polished oaken tables. Selgaunt's Old Chauncel sat around the tables in plush high-backed chairs like so many overdressed peacocks. The city's merchant patriarchs laughed, dealed, and forged alliances while they dined and drank. Mostly drank. Except for Thamalon. Cale's lord never drank more than one chalice of wine when business was afoot. And in Sembia, business was always afoot.

Despite the fact that he had called this gathering, the Hulorn had not yet made an appearance. *Typical.* Cale felt sure that the city's ruler was mad. He habitually wore oversized, hooded cloaks—seemingly to hide his features—and was only rarely seen in public. Rumors were running through the city like dung through a cowbird.

To stay sharp until the Hulorn made his appearance, Cale did what he always did: gathered information for his lord. Unfortunately, the conversation among the members of the Old Chauncel was an indistinguishable hum, even to Cale's exceptionally keen ears. He read lips where he could, but chalices and forks interfered with even that, and he learned nothing worth knowing.

Like Cale, the servants of the rest of the Old Chauncel patriarchs stood at station along the wall behind their respective lords. Collectively, they formed a perimeter of flesh around the hall. In accordance with the custom for mass meetings of the Old Chauncel, each merchant noble had brought along only one trusted man—a wolmoner, in the tongue of ancient Sembia. The term translated roughly as "vigil man," and meant, in its original sense, a bodyguard and advisor. Over the centuries, however, the nature of the office had changed. Today, the wolmoner was usually a mere servant; sometimes, however, he was a bodyguard, and sometimes he was even a spy. In Cale's case, he was all three. The perfect wolmoner of old.

He scanned the room, eyed each patriarch's man in turn. He could often deduce something of the master's intentions for the meeting by observing the nature and mannerisms of the master's man. If nothing else, it might indicate to him on whom exactly he should focus.

Cale figured the "servant" waiting on Kosos Deenth to be a soldier in disguise, for his posture and manner fairly screamed "military." House Deenth believed Kosos needed a bodyguard then. *Why? Is he at odds with the Hulorn?*

Elsewhere, a slim sycophant overdressed in green velvet threaded with gold served Armin Thest, no doubt to highlight House Thest's wealth in recently securing a lucrative spice transporting contract with the Priakos trading coster. . . .

Cale stopped. Stared.

In the gather of men along the wall behind Lords Talendar and Liamos stood Drasek Riven. The Zhent assassin was disguised as a servant, but Cale recognized him nevertheless. No disguise could hide Riven's signature sneer, nor his predatory, one-eyed glare. Both had bloodied the other in battles past, and both had promised to do so again.

Their gazes met and locked.

Riven's one eye went wide with recognition. His sneer deepened, and his right hand vanished into an inner pocket of his tunic and remained there. He had a weapon, no doubt.

In the space of three breaths, a thousand thoughts raced through Cale's mind. *Does Riven serve House Talendar? Have the Talendar allied with the Zhents?*

Cale carefully took in Riven's livery. It looked similar to several of the lesser houses present—ingeniously so—but it was not the same. *He serves no house then. So why is he here? Have the Zhents an independent agenda? Is he scouting a target?*

With their gazes still locked, Riven began to glide slowly along the wall toward Cale. Cale did the same, toward Riven.

Then Cale remembered that he was unarmed. He scanned those near him. There—a member of the Hulorn's Palace Guard with his eyes toward the tables. Cale veered toward the guard, passed near enough to brush his cloak. As he did, he lifted the man's dagger, inverted the weapon so the blade ran along his wrist up the sleeve, and returned his gaze to Riven.

They continued to close. Ten paces. Seven. Cale didn't know what he was going to do, but he was sure it would be messy. Five.

Trumpets blared from above. Both men froze and looked up.

From the balconies overlooking the tables, the Hulorn's heralds blew another clarion. The palace steward's voice rang out from the balcony along the northern wall.

"Gentlemen. His most esteemed lordship, the highest of the Old Chauncel, the Hulorn of the city."

A scattering of a soft applause from the mer-

chant lords greeted this announcement, only enough not to give offense.

The Hulorn stepped forward to the balcony's rail. He wore a blue satin cloak, heavily embroidered, and a half-mask that hid much of his face. When he spoke, Cale thought his voice sounded strangely enervated.

"My Lords, I thank you for answering my summons upon such short notice. I trust the meal has been satisfactory?"

The lords murmured approval.

"Excellent. I hope you will forgive my absence. My health has been . . . inconsistent of late."

More murmuring.

"You are all busy men, and no doubt wonder at my purpose. I will not keep you in suspense. My purpose is simply this: I have appointed a Proxy."

The room was utterly silent for a moment, then exploded in conversation: surprise, alarm, shouted questions. Cale too was taken aback. The office of Proxy had stood empty for over fifty years, and for good reason. The Hulorn was obligated by the iron manacles of Sembian custom to stand above the rivalries of the Old Chauncel, to arbitrate, to mediate, and to act for the good of the whole. The Proxy was bound by no such obligation, yet it spoke for the Hulorn. The house of the Proxy became the preeminent house in the city, second only to that of the Hulorn, but unbound by the social customs that held the Hulorn in check. A Proxy could freely favor his own house, and only the Hulorn stood in his way.

The Hulorn risked much in appointing a Proxy, Cale knew. A Proxy provided a legitimate means for the Hulorn to act outside of his social constraints; but history had shown that ambitious Proxies could bring down a Hulorn. The city's ruler was either very clever or very stupid. Cale figured the latter.

The Hulorn let the murmuring continue for a time before he went on. "You are all no doubt wondering which house I will favor." He let the suspense build for a moment. "None. No house. Dezyk, step forward."

Necks craned. Eyes narrowed.

"Gentlemen, I present to you Dezyk Cantor, my Proxy and hand, with full authority to act in my name and stead. He is not Sembian, but will serve Selgaunt well."

The patriarchs of the Old Chauncel were too stunned even to applaud.

Dezyk stepped to the balcony's edge to stand beside the Hulorn. His purple velvet robes *shooshed* loud in the silence. He obviously deemed the quiet an affront. His eyes narrowed and his thin lips pulled back from his teeth.

"I look forward to hearing your . . . requests, gentlemen." His voice was a serpent's hiss.

Cale recognized him the moment he stepped forward, although he did not bear the rod from Cale's dream. The Proxy was the servant of Cyric Cale had seen in his vision, and Mask wanted Cale to kill him. Mask's voice seemed to sound in his head; *Root out the evil.*

"Dark and empty," he quietly oathed.

Then he remembered Riven. He tightened his grip on the dagger and looked to the Zhent assassin.

Riven stood staring up at Dezyk the way a wolf looks at a wayward lamb. Cale saw Dezyk's death in Riven's stare.

The assassin must have felt the weight of Cale's gaze, for he turned from Dezyk and fixed his eye on Cale.

Cale held his gaze for a moment, then looked back up at Dezyk. Riven followed Cale's eyes and looked back to him. When they made eye contact again, realization lit Riven's face. He knew and smiled.

Cale and Riven had determined to kill the same man. What were the odds of that? Cale did not believe in coincidences. He saw Mask's hand in this.

In handcant, he signaled to Riven, *The west hall, five minutes.* Riven pondered for a moment, then signaled acquiescence.

"Enjoy the rest of your meal, gentlemen," said the Hulorn, and backed away from the balcony with Dezyk.

Once again conversation erupted throughout the hall. Through the surprise and anger, all of the Old Chauncel began to calculate their next move, determining how to turn this unforeseen change in Selgaunt's political waters to the advantage of their house. Unlike Cale, they did not realize that Dezyk was already dead. Still, Cale knew his lord would be looking for him.

He stuffed the dagger under his tunic and walked to Thamalon's table. The conversation at the table was heated. Cale waited for Thamalon to acknowledge him. When he did, Cale stepped forward. The table fell silent. Cale had expected as much.

From a pocket in his doublet, he removed a walnut pipe and a small pouch filled with Sembian leaf.

"My lord. Your after-dinner pipe."

Thamalon, who normally did not smoke, did not hesitate for a moment. "Thank you, Erevis. Light it please."

Cale took his time in tamping the pipe. While he did so, the conversation at the table renewed. They had probably forgotten his presence already.

Cale lit the pipe from a candle at the table, careful to keep the candle wax out of the bowl. He presented it to Thamalon. "My Lord."

"Thank you, Erevis." He took a pull on the pipe.

"There are many new faces here, my lord."

Thamalon took the point and nodded—Cale had never seen Dezyk before.

"Aye," his Lord responded. "Perhaps I should get to know some of them better?"

Cale took the point as well. Thamalon was asking Cale to use his contacts to learn all he could of Dezyk. "Indeed, Lord," Cale acknowledged, "if there is need. But strangers come and go."

Thamalon raised his eyes at that. Perhaps he understood; perhaps he did not.

Cale nodded and excused himself from the table. He had to meet Riven.

He found the Zhent assassin in a quiet side hall off of the main reception area. Both men kept their hands visible.

"Cale."

"Riven."

They stood about two paces apart, alert and ready. Cale did not waste time.

"I told you I'd kill you the next time I saw you." He spoke without fear, but put his odds at no better than one in two.

Riven sneered.

Cale glared at him; Riven glared back. They stood like that for an eternity.

At last, Riven broke the silence.

"To be precise Cale, you told me you'd try to kill me if you found me with a Zhent badge. You haven't. I'm out, through with the Network."

Cale tried to keep the surprise out of

his face. Riven could be lying, but why would he?

"But you don't have to let that stop you."

Cale ignored the challenge. More and more he saw Mask in this. He needed information. "Why'd you leave?"

Riven smirked. "A difference of opinion."

Cale digested that. He'd get no more, and they still had today's business to address.

"Out or not, I know what you're here to do."

Riven gave a brief nod of acknowledgement. "And I know that you want to do the same. So?"

"Who are you working for?"

Riven's eye narrowed. "Me. He's got something I want."

Cale was surprised to have gotten that much of an answer. He decided to push further. "And what is that?"

Riven ignored the question and asked one of his own. "What makes you willing to dirty your hands, Cale?"

Cale decided to be open, in the interest of eliciting more information. "He's got something I want too."

Riven shifted on his feet. "Seems we've got a problem then."

Cale readied himself too. "Seems we do."

Hands went to daggers.

An idea formed in Cale's mind. If Mask was at work here, then surely he had brought the two of them together for a reason. "We can do it this way," he said, hefting the dagger. "Or another way."

Riven eyed him warily. "How else can it go, Cale?"

Cale decided to roll the bones. "He's got an ivory rod. That's what I'm after." Cale did not bother telling Riven that Dezyk was also a Cyricist whose presence in high office threatened the city. Riven would not care.

The assassin let his own blade drop a handwidth. He considered for a moment, then said, "He's also got a black staff. That's mine."

Cale nodded. "Done then?"

"Done."

Riven sheathed his blade. Cale did the same.

Riven stepped forward and spoke in a whisper. "I'll trail him for a few days, learn his pattern. I'll let you know the when and where."

Cale found the thought of working with Riven distasteful, but saw no other way. Besides, he had worked with worse. "This operation is just you and me, Riven. No one else. I see anyone else, even think that I see anyone else, and I walk. Then I'll find you and kill you."

Riven smiled through his goatee. "I'd expect nothing less."

They backed away from each other and went their separate ways—at least for now.

Word came from Riven five days later, in the form of a letter written by a scribe-for-hire. Cale wondered if Riven knew how to read and write. *The Stag. Tonight, two hours after dusk. Come prepared.*

That night, after completing his duties supervising the house staff, Cale prayed to Mask for spells, loaded his gear into a leather rucksack, and excused himself from the manse on personal business. His lord, consistent with past practice, did not press Cale for details. No one else dared question him.

CALE FELT THE STRANGE CALMNESS THAT ALWAYS CAME OVER HIM WHEN HE WAS ON A JOB. JUST LIKE THE OLD DAYS.

When he got out of eyeshot of Stormweather, he ducked into a side alley off Sarn Street, opened the rucksack, and strapped on his gear: his blades, leather armor, cloak, and soft boots. He took a deep breath of the cool spring air and headed for the Black Stag.

It took a few seconds for Cale's vision to adjust to the dim, smoky interior of the Stag. The sour stink of old vomit and the greasy smell of fish oil filled his nostrils. The Stag's few patrons eyed him darkly as he crossed the wood planked floor. Riven, he saw, sat in a corner near the bar, dressed in his signature crimson cloak. Cale walked to the bar and laid a silver raven on the stained wood.

"One."

The scrawny bartender drew an ale from the barrel behind the bar and pushed Cale the tankard. Cale took a long draw of the watery swill, then walked to Riven's table.

The assassin took in Cale's weapons and gave him a nod. "Cale."

Cale returned the nod and took a seat. The hilts of Riven's sabers were visible through his cloak. On the bench beside him sat two crossbows.

Riven noticed him eyeing the crossbows. "You know how to use one of those?"

"Of course." A good assassin knew how to use almost every weapon. And Cale was . . . had been, a good assassin.

"Good. We'll need them tonight."

Cale took another draw on his ale. He did not like the adrenal rush he felt when he thought about the hit. It reminded him too much of old times, times he wanted to leave in the past.

Riven took a pull on his ale.

"What's the location?" Cale asked.

"Jespar Lane. In the warehouse district. On the way to the whores. Seems our Dezyk's got a weakness for women."

Cale knew the place. A narrow street, with tall buildings on every side. Buildings that would be mostly unoccupied at night.

"How many?"

Riven grinned. "A carriage. Probably five, six guards."

"Doable," Cale said.

"Very doable," agreed Riven, and finished his ale. "We should get in position. Grab a crossbow."

Cale and Riven crouched in the shadows under the eaves of a closed coopers shop. The widely spaced lamps of Jespar Lane left the narrow thoroughfare dark. No one was in sight. Riven withdrew a hood and black mask—not unlike the one Cale carried as a holy symbol—from his belt pouch.

"Here." He held out the hooded mask to Cale.

"Brought my own," replied Cale. He wanted to ask

Riven where he had gotten the black mask, but he wasn't sure he'd like the answer. The masks were a necessary precaution. No one could be allowed to see their faces. Putting down the Proxy, for whatever reason, amounted to a political assassination. There would be an extensive investigation afterward, including the use of divination magic. Under the spells of a powerful priest, even the dead could be compelled to describe what had happened to them—who had happened to them. This had to go flawlessly.

Cale felt the strange calmness that always came over him when he was on a job. Just like the old days. But unlike the old days, he heard a little voice within him telling him that he was about to commit murder.

The welfare of the city is at stake, he reminded himself, and Dezyk is a Cyricist. Some part of him recognized the weakness of the rationalization, but he held on to it tighter than a dwarven miser held his coppers.

Riven looked up the empty street. "It will be a black carriage. Team of two horses plus the guards."

Cale nodded. He knew what the palace carriages looked like. He also knew they'd need to stop the carriage. Without some kind of roadblock, that would be difficult. Unless . . .

"Did you buy the driver?"

Riven grinned. "Yeah. Expensive bastard. He'll rein the horses when he reaches that street lamp." He pointed at the street lamp nearest them, maybe a dagger toss away. "That's when we go."

Cale imagined the target, imagined the rearing horses, rehearsed the hit in his mind. He looked Riven in the face. "Does the driver walk?"

Riven sniffed, sighted along his crossbow at his own imaginary target. "Of course not."

The old Cale would have agreed, would have left no potential witnesses; the new Cale did not. "Does he know who you are?"

Riven looked at him as though he were a child. "Of course he doesn't know who I am. What are you thinking?"

Cale would not shed any more blood than absolutely necessary. "Then he's no danger to us. He walks." He dared Riven with his eyes to contradict him.

Riven didn't. After a moment, he smiled. "You must be getting soft, Cale. All that easy living." His smile turned to a sneer. "But I'll indulge you . . . this time. He walks. The Watch'll track him down and kill him anyway."

They sat in silence for a time. Cale readied his crossbow and bolts, laid his blades beside him. Riven did the same. They took a knee behind the cooper's display barrels.

"How long?" Cale asked.

"Not long now," replied Riven, and pulled on his mask.

Cale pulled on his holy symbol—a black velvet mask that hid only half his face. This was the first time he had ever actually worn the mask. It felt like . . . like it had always been there. He knew he and Riven must look much the same.

"He'll have the staff and rod?" Cale asked.

"I don't know."

"You don't know!"

Riven spoke in a hiss. "There's no way to know, Cale! Did you see it on him at the Hulorn's reception? I didn't. Did you want to have a go at him in the Hulorn's palace? Huh? I didn't think so. We take our chances here."

Cale saw the sense of it, but cursed nevertheless.

"If he doesn't have them, we'll convince him to tell us where they are. Well enough?"

Cale nodded, though he knew what Riven meant by convince. "Well enough," he muttered.

Within a quarter hour, both of them heard a carriage approaching.

"Ready," Riven said, and readied his crossbow.

Cale silently rehearsed the words to a spell in his mind. His crossbow and blades lay on the ground beside him. "Ready. I'll silence the area around the carriage. They won't be able to make a sound, and they won't hear us."

Riven looked at him sidelong, obviously uncomfortable with spellcasting. "Fine. We need to be clear in less than a hundred count, so don't waste all your time with spells."

The carriage came into view.

Two guards sat on the driver's bench, flanking the uniformed driver. Cocked crossbows rested on their knees. Two more rode on the back rail, similarly armed. The additional guards must have been within the carriage.

The horses pulled at an easy canter, the clopping of their hooves on the pavement loud in the otherwise silent night. Cale took in the guards' demeanor: They looked alert but relaxed.

Good, he thought.

The carriage drew closer. When it got within a quarter of a block of the signal street lamp, Cale recited the words to his prayer in a whisper. The incantation forcefully reminded him that Mask had started this whole process; Mask had pulled Riven in; Mask wanted Cale again to become an assassin.

There was nothing he could do about it, he realized. Not now. In for a dram, in for a drink. He finished the spell and grabbed his crossbow.

The field of magical silence took effect a moment before the wagon reached the street lamp. The clopping of the horses fell silent. In nearly the same instant, the driver jerked hard on the reins. The horses reared up, neighing silently.

The twang of Riven's crossbow sounded beside Cale. The guard to the left of the driver fell dead, a bolt through his face.

"I've got the rear," Riven said, calm as a windless sea. He stood, slung his crossbow, drew his magical sabres, and ran for the carriage.

Cale shot the second guard on the driver's bench through the throat as he tried to leap down to the road. The man tumbled face down to cobbles, leaking crimson. Cale slung his crossbow, grabbed his blades, and rushed the carriage, only a few steps behind Riven.

The guards at the rear of the carriage, though confused by the silence, saw them coming. They hopped off to the road, drew their blades, and waited for Riven.

Still outside the globe of silence, Cale stopped and hurriedly incanted another prayer, this one to hold immobile the target of his spell. Mentally, he chose one of the guards. The man went rigid.

Riven closed on the other guard. Within the silence, the combat made no sound. Riven's sabers were a blur. The guard parried the assassin's initial thrust, spun, and tried a reverse slash to Riven's throat. The assassin ducked below the guard's slash, and at the same time sliced his sabre across the guard's

knee. The man collapsed, grimacing. Riven stabbed him through the chest with his other sabre.

Before Riven could sprint for the carriage door, Cale called upon Mask again. A globe of darkness took shape around the carriage. Within, the Proxy and his guards would now be unable to hear or see.

Riven skidded to a halt before running into the darkness. He looked back to Cale.

Cale signaled in handcant. *My doing. I drop the darkness. You're on the door. Crossbows first, then cleanup.*

Riven nodded, and both unslung their crossbows. As he loaded, Riven's eyes went to the guard held immobile near the rear of the carriage. He raised his eyebrows in a question.

Cale signaled sharply. *He walks too.*

Riven smiled darkly while he cocked his crossbow.

When they had loaded, Cale took aim at where he believed the carriage door to be. Riven did the same.

Cale mentally dispelled the globe of darkness.

The carriage door flew open, and two guards burst out, blades bare. Bolts flew and both guards fell, shot through the chest.

Dezyk leaped out behind them and jumped to the street. In his left hand, he held a thin stick of iron tipped with silver; in his right, another thin stick, this one tipped with a sapphire.

Wands, Cale realized. Dezyk was a wizard! *Dark and empty!* He tried to shout a warning, but the silence ate the sound. Riven must have realized the danger, however, for he dove to his right just as a bolt of lightning exploded from the sapphire-tipped wand. The jagged bolt cut a path through the air, caught Riven in mid-dive, and spun him full around. The stink of ozone and burned flesh filled the street. Cale bared his blade and rushed Dezyk, but before he had taken two strides, four glowing missiles shot from the other wand and burned their way into Cale's chest. The impact stopped Cale's charge cold. Dezyk turned and ran away up the street, his mouth contorted with the effort to yell for help. If he got out the silence spell . . .

His clothes still smoking, Riven regained his feet and pounced like a cat. Cale was right behind him. They caught the slow wizard in only a few strides. Both jumped on his back and rode him to the ground before he could bring his wands to bear. Riven's sabre cut both wands from Dezyk's hand. Fingers and blood spilled to the earth. Dezyk screamed silently. Riven shoved his face into the dirt of the street. Cale gathered the wands and pocketed them. He and Riven could distribute them later.

A few punches from Riven ended the wizard's struggling, and they turned him over. The Proxy stared with wide eyes. His mouth was racing. Cale held a finger to his lips to tell him to shut up. For emphasis, he showed Dezyk his longsword. The wizard's mouth closed.

Cale dispelled the magical silence. "Keep your mouth shut," Cale ordered. He looked to Riven. "Search him."

Riven quickly rifled the wizard's clothes. He found a medallion engraved with Cyric's symbol. The assassin spat and threw the symbol to the ground. "Nothing worth anything," he said, and kneed Dezyk in the back.

His clothes still smoking, Riven regained his feet and pounced like a cat. Cale was right behind him.

Cale held his blade to Dezyk's throat. "You've got an ivory rod and a black staff, Cyricist. Where are they?"

For a moment Dezyk looked confused, but he regathered himself. "You'll get nothing from me, bastards. The Dark Sun protects his own." His eyes went to the symbol on the ground. "You'll pay for this—"

Cale punched him in the mouth. Teeth fell to the road. The wizard groaned and his eyes rolled back in his head, but still he shook his head *no.*

Riven circled behind him and grabbed him by his hair to expose his throat. His sabre threatened the jugular. He spoke in a hiss; Cale knew the tone. Dezyk's life hung by a thread.

"We'll ask once more. Only once. You can tell us what we want to know or I can drag you into that abandoned building there," he nodded at a darkened warehouse, "and inflict pain for hours. With another silence spell, no one will hear. I'll count to three." He paused to let that sink in.

Cale saw the battle on Dezyk's face—stay true to his faith and die ugly, or turn his back on his god and live.

"One."

Dezyk began to shake. "No. You won't do it. The Watch will come. I'm the Proxy."

"Two."

"All right, gods damn it!" shouted Dezyk. "All right." The Proxy glanced at the symbol of Cyric lying in the road, but quickly looked away. Cale saw the surrender in his eyes.

"Jurid Gauston has what you want."

Cale noticed Riven stiffen at the name. "Who is Gauston?" Cale asked Dezyk.

"A priest. Of Cyric."

Cale saw it now. This Gauston was the true servant of Cyric. Dezyk was nothing more than a lackey. "Gauston enspelled the Hulorn? Forced him to appoint you?"

Dezyk said nothing, but his eyes told Cale the truth of it.

"Where is he?"

Dezyk hesitated. Riven slashed his ribs. The wizard squealed like a pig.

"Where?"

Dezyk collapsed in on himself. "Hevranin Street. In the rooms over Nestor's tool shop."

"Alone?"

The wizard nodded. "Usually."

Cale believed him. To judge from Riven's nod, so did he. Riven's gaze stayed with Cale and asked the unspoken question. What to do with Dezyk?

"Leave him," Cale said. This Dezyk was no threat to the city; he was a coward, an opportunist who served Cyric to bring himself power. Once Cale and Riven eliminated Gauston, the real threat, Dezyk would be discovered and dealt with. Cale wanted no more blood on his hands than necessary.

Mask might want to remake him into an assassin, but he wouldn't be an indiscriminate killer.

To Cale's surprise, Riven did not argue. He pulled Dezyk close and said, "If you warn him, if I even think that you've warned him, I'll come back for you and keep my promise. You know you're vulnerable now. Think about that before you run your mouth."

Riven punched the wizard in the jaw, and Dezyk collapsed with a groan, unconscious. Riven found the driver he had bought and wounded him across the chest to make it look good—all out of eye- and earshot of the immobile guard—then he and Cale removed their masks and went on their way.

"You know this Gauston?" Cale asked as they hurried uptown.

Riven nodded. "He's a former Zhent. Things have been . . . uncomfortable for Cyricists since the Banites retook the organization. I heard he was dead."

Cale had heard only a little about the internecine war within the Zhents between the Cyricists and Banites. The Cyricists were losing. Gauston probably hadn't had it easy over the past months. It would be even less easy tonight.

Riven went on. "I know the location too. An old Zhent hole; the Network stopped using it years ago." He sneered. "This one's nothing. Just a rat hiding in an old hole. No friends. No protection. An easy takedown."

An easy takedown. It should have made Cale feel relieved; instead, it made him feel . . . heavy. *Root out the evil,* he reminded himself, parroting Mask. *This Gauston is a threat to the city and a priest of the Dark Sun.*

Before they got into this any further, Cale had to know Riven's true motivation. He stopped and grabbed Riven by the shoulder. "Why are you doing this, Riven? Just to get a staff?"

Riven hesitated a moment too long. "Little late for that question, isn't it? But yeah. The staff."

Cale knew he was lying; Mask was pulling the assassin's strings, same as Cale. Had the Shadowlord Called Riven too?

"You're doing it for a rod, Cale. What's the difference?"

The difference was that Cale thought he was doing good—for himself and the city. To Riven, he said, "None. No difference."

Riven pulled free of Cale's grasp. "Then let's get on with it."

Cale let it go. He knew what he needed to know.

They went the rest of the way in silence, keeping to the alleys and avoiding Selgaunt's nighttime street traffic. When they reached the tool shop, they blended into the darkness of an alley across the street and observed for a time. Cale saw nothing; no guards, no precautions of any kind. This priest of Cyric was either very confident or very stupid.

The lower floor of the tool shop stood dark, its door locked, its windows shuttered. Lantern light leaked through the closed shutters of the upper floor windows. An exterior stairway built along the side of the building provided independent ingress and egress to the upper floor.

AN EASY TAKEDOWN. IT SHOULD HAVE MADE CALE FEEL RELIEVED; INSTEAD, IT MADE HIM FEEL . . . HEAVY.

"Stairs and door are probably protected with spells, at least," Riven said softly.

Cale nodded. He did not mention that he could detect and dispel any such spells; no need to tip Riven to any more of his abilities than necessary.

"The window on the side then," Cale said.

"Agreed."

Cale darted across the street. Riven followed. They circled the building and silently scaled the side wall until they reached the window.

Cale put his ear to the shutter slats. The crackle of a fire, nothing more. He signaled Riven for silence, maintained his position on the wall, and withdrew a thin-bladed knife from his belt. He slid the blade between the shutters and silently lifted the latch. To Riven, he signaled, *Done. Ready in three.*

He counted to three, pulled the large shutters open, and pulled himself into the room. Riven followed. Nothing but a plain desk table and two large, high-backed chairs facing the stone hearth. Two men could have been seated in each of those chairs and Cale would not have been able to see them. Cale signaled Riven and they advanced on the chairs, blades drawn.

A thin, middle-aged old man unfolded himself from the left-hand chair and turned to face them. "I wondered when you would arrive." He wore purple robes, and a silver symbol of Cyric hung from a long chain about his neck—Gauston. Deep circles painted the skin below his eyes, and his face was drawn. Two days growth of gray beard peppered his cheeks.

Cale's eyes went to Gauston's hand, where he held a staff . . . or a rod . . . composed of two intricately entwined tree limbs, each as thick as a man's thumb—one of white birch, the other of black ebony, and so twisted up in each other so as to be inseparable. A skull capped the staff. Cale was sure the lipless teeth of the skull were grinning. *Root out the evil. Very funny.*

Cale looked to Riven; Riven looked to him. Cale's rod and Riven's staff were one and the same, and only one of them could leave with it. Mask had engineered a duel.

"Afterward?" Cale asked.

"Afterward," agreed Riven.

Without another word, Riven bounded across the room. Gauston raised the staff and softly stated, "Stop where you are."

Riven froze in mid-stride.

"Slash your left arm with the blade in your right hand. Deeply."

To Cale's astonishment, Riven did exactly that. The assassin grunted in pain as he opened his forearm. Crimson spilled from the slit.

Gauston eyed Cale and indicated the staff. "You came for this, did you not?" He laughed, a hacking, staccato sound.

Cale took a step forward, his blade held loosely at his side. Gauston did not look concerned.

Cale's mind raced, *That damned staff is powerful!* He talked to buy time. "How did you know we were coming?"

Gauston walked around the big chair and took a step toward Cale. "How did I know?" He eyed Cale with hooded eyes. "Because Cyric has seen fit to show me that, though he shows me nothing else."

Cale did not understand. He took another half-step toward Gauston.

Gauston eyed him up and down. "You're a priest, aren't you?" His voice was almost sad.

Cale had never been asked that question directly, and he stuttered with the answer. "Yes," he said finally. *What is going on here?*

Gauston's eyes found the floor. "As was I, once." Before Cale could attack, Gauston looked sharply. "But no longer. Now my god grants me no spells. I have only this." He brandished the staff. "And you would take even that from me, wouldn't you, priest?"

Cale saw no point in lying. "I would," he said, and eased forward another half-step.

At Cale's directness, Gauston smiled. His eyes grew thoughtful . . .

Exploding into motion, Cale launched himself across the room, hit Gauston full in the chest, slammed him up against the wall, and drove him to the floor. Gauston's breath went out with a *whoosh.* Cale jerked the staff from his grasp, then put a knee on his chest and a blade at his throat.

To Cale's surprise, Gauston did not even struggle. His eyes had the resigned look of the condemned. "Do it."

Cale raised his blade. That was why he had come, but . . .

"Why?"

Gauston's eyes swelled with angry tears. "You're a priest! You know why!"

Cale shook his head. He didn't know.

"Because I betrayed my faith!" Gauston railed. "When the Banites," he fairly spat the word, "took back the Zhents, I renounced Cyric rather than face the sword." He looked to the ceiling, tears in his eyes. "But never in my heart, Dark Sun! Never in my heart." He returned his gaze to Cale. "Since then, he has seen fit to fill my dreams with images of you. You are to be my penance, priest. Now . . . do what you came for!"

Cale saw it all now, and it made him want to puke. Abandoned by his god, this fool Gauston wanted to die. Fine. But Mask had seen fit to oblige Gauston while at the same time manipulating Cale and Riven into retrieving the same item, thereby forcing a confrontation between them that would leave one of them dead.

"Who do you serve?" asked Gauston, intently. "Which god?"

"Mask," Cale replied, without thinking.

Gauston grinned. "Yes, yes, of course. Then you must kill me."

Cale looked down at him, so desperate to die. Mask obviously wanted Cale to be his assassin, to leave two corpses behind in this room. Cale decided abruptly that he would leave none.

"SLASH YOUR LEFT ARM WITH THE BLADE IN YOUR RIGHT HAND. DEEPLY." TO CALE'S ASTONISHMENT, RIVEN DID EXACTLY THAT.

Gauston must have sensed Cale's change of heart. "I am a servant of the Dark Sun, the enemy of your god." He squirmed, tried to grab the staff, tried to break free. Cale maintained his hold.

"Do it, priest! Do it! Who do you serve? Who?"

Myself, thought Cale.

He reversed his longsword and slammed the hilt against Gauston's temple. He groaned and went limp.

Cale rose. Behind him, Riven remained immobile, held fast by the staff. Cale had to admit that the staff tempted him; the power it offered was considerable. But he would not take it like this.

He walked over to Riven, blade bare, and held the staff before his eyes.

"You see what's happened? We've both been nothing more than playthings of Mask. He wanted you and I to kill that wretch then fight each other. The stronger would remain his servant." He let that sink in. "I could claim the staff and kill you now—remember that later—but I won't."

Cale sheathed his blade, walked to the hearth, and tossed the staff into the flames.

He walked back to Riven. "I know he's Called you. He must have. You better think well about whether you want to answer." Riven's arm was still bleeding badly. Cale thought about it, then pulled out his velvet mask. Here was the test. If he still had Mask's favor, he still could heal. If not . . .

Then not, he said to himself.

He recited the prayer and willed the assassin's wounds to heal. Energy poured through him and into Riven. The slash closed; the bleeding stopped. For now at least, Mask seemed to respect his independence.

Cale glanced back at the hearth. The fire had nearly consumed the staff. "When that's burned up," he said to Riven, "the magic holding you will end. I'm not waiting."

With that, Cale climbed out the window. When he hit the street, he silently vowed never to lose himself in his faith the way Gauston had. A man had to remain himself, even if he was a priest.

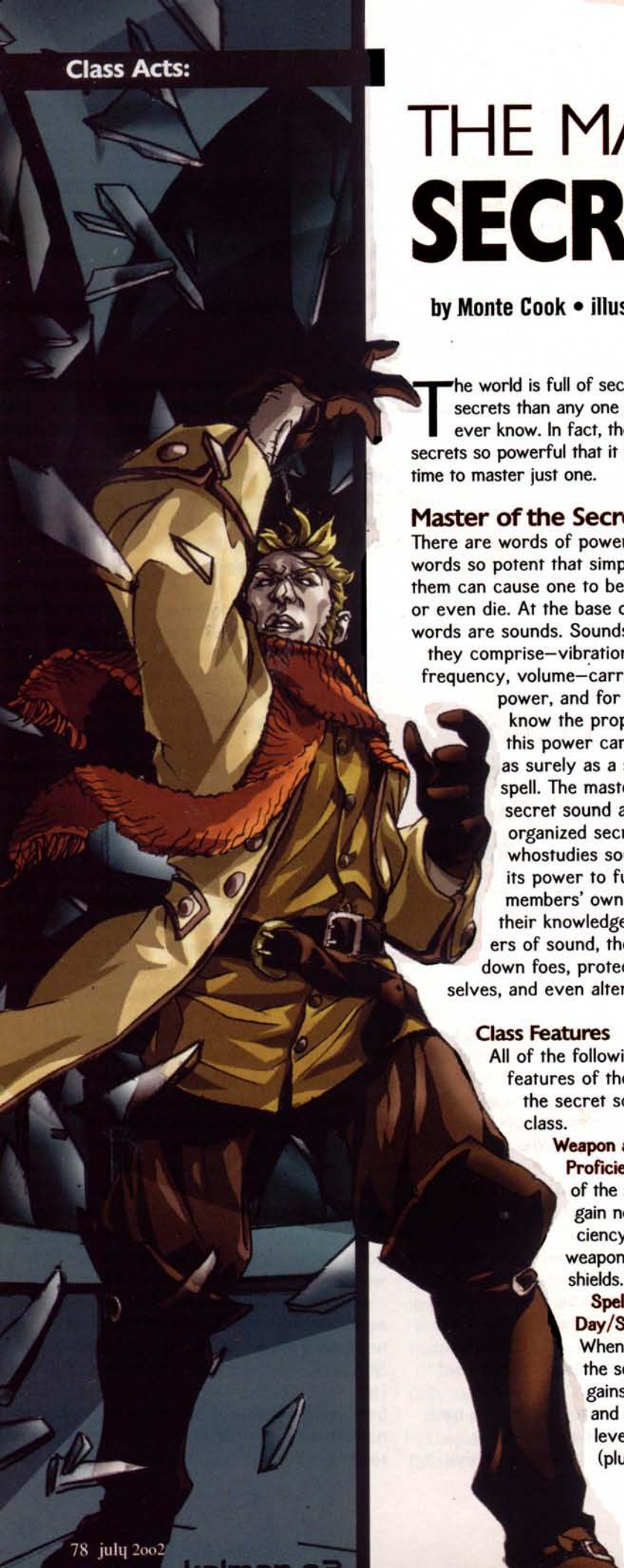
My belief is on my terms, he thought to Mask. *Take it or leave it.*

As usual, Mask said nothing and gave him no sign.

Before he had gotten a block, Riven's voice sounded from back up the street. "Cale!"

Cale stopped and turned. Riven stood in the open window of Gauston's flat. "Maybe he didn't bring us together to fight, Cale. Maybe he just wanted to bring us together." Riven's laugh rolled down the street. "Think about it. We work well together, Cale."

Too well, Cale thought, but said nothing. He walked away and headed for the Stormweather Towers. He hoped that his bed would hold no dreams tonight.



THE MASTER OF THE SECRET SOUND

by Monte Cook • illustrated by Kalman Andrasofszky

The world is full of secrets; more secrets than any one person can ever know. In fact, there are some secrets so powerful that it takes a lifetime to master just one.

Master of the Secret Sound

There are words of power—magical words so potent that simply speaking them can cause one to become blind or even die. At the base of these words are sounds. Sounds and all that they comprise—vibration, modulation, frequency, volume—carry with them power, and for those who know the proper sounds, this power can be wielded as surely as a sword or a spell. The masters of the secret sound are a loosely organized secret society whostudies sound and uses its power to further its members' own ends. With their knowledge of the powers of sound, they can strike down foes, protect themselves, and even alter their spells.

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the master of the secret sound prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Masters of the secret sound gain no new proficiency with weapons, armor, or shields.

Spells Per Day/Spells Known: When a master of the secret sound gains her 1st level, and every other level thereafter (plus 10th level), the character gains new spells per day (and spells known, if applicable) as if she had also gained a level in a spellcasting class to which she belonged before adding the prestige class. She does not, however, gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained (improved chance of controlling or rebuking undead, metamagic or item creation feats, and so on). This essentially means that she adds the new level of master of the secret sound to the level of whatever other spellcasting class she has, then determines spells per day, spells known, and caster level accordingly.

If a character had more than one spellcasting class before she became a master of the secret sound, she must decide to which class she adds the level of master of the secret sound for the purpose of determining spells per day and spells known.

Sound of Stunning (Sp): Once per day for every three class levels, the master of the secret sound can speak a sound as a standard action that affects a single target within 30 feet. The foe must make a Will saving throw (DC 10 + the master of the secret sound's class level + Charisma modifier) or be stunned for 1d4 rounds. This is a sonic ability that uses the master of the secret sound's total character level as the caster level.

Intensify Frequency (Su): By manipulating magic like it was sound, a 2nd-level master of the secret sound can adjust a spell's damage. Any spell that inflicts damage is intensified so that it inflicts +1d6 additional points of sonic damage. This additional damage is for the entire spell, so everyone caught in a *fireball's* area of effect suffers +1d6 sonic damage, but a *magic missile* spell cast at two targets splits the additional +1d6 sonic damage between them.

Sound of Shielding (Sp): Once per day for every three class levels, a 3rd-level master of the secret sound can

speak a sound as a standard action. The sonic energy released from this sound envelopes the master of the secret sound, granting a deflection bonus to AC equal to her class level. This sonic shield does not hamper any actions and lasts for 2 rounds per class level. This is a sonic ability that uses the master of the secret sound's total character level as the caster level.

Partial Vibration Shift (Sp): Once per day for every three class levels, a 4th-level master of the secret sound can alter the vibrational speed of non-living objects around her as a standard action. This allows her to render objects translucent for a number of rounds equal to her class level. Any object that she desires within 30 feet that is less than 1 foot thick per class level of the master of the secret sound can be peered through as if it were simply a translucent veil. When looking around quickly, it's possible for a master of the secret sound to scan an area of up to 100 square feet during 1 round. For example, during 1 round she could scan an area of stone 10 feet wide and 10 feet high. Alternatively, she could scan an area 5 feet wide and 20 feet high. Secret compartments, drawers, recesses, and doors are revealed by this visual scan. This is a sonic ability that uses the master of the secret sound's total character level as the caster level.

Alter Modulation (Su): At 5th level, the master of the secret sound can alter the modulation of one spell per day, allowing it to travel through a solid object, such as a wall, as long as that solid object is within 30 feet of the master of the secret sound. Spells requiring that the caster see the target still have that requirement (making this useful with the *partial vibration shift* ability). Using this ability is a free action. For example, a character could use this ability along with casting *cone of cold,* and the cone's area could move through a wall within 30 feet of the caster. Likewise, if, after partially shifting the vibrations of a door using the *partial vibration shift* ability, a master of the secret sound could use the alter modulation ability in conjunction with a *hold person* spell and affect someone on the other side of the door.

Sound of Destruction (Sp): Once per day, a 6th-level master of the secret sound can speak a sound as a standard action that affects a single non-living object within 30 feet that is no larger than 10 cubic feet. The object is disintegrated as per the spell *disintegrate.* This is a sonic ability that uses the master of the secret sound's total character level as the caster level. Magic items and items held by characters can attempt a Fortitude saving throw (DC 10 + class level + Charisma modifier).

Total Vibration Shift (Sp): Once per day for every three class levels, a 7th-level master of the secret sound can alter the vibrational speed of non-living objects around her. This allows her to pass through objects as if she was using a *dimension door* spell.

Sound of Controlling (Sp): Once per day, an 8th-level master of the secret sound can speak a sound as a standard action that affects a single living creature within 30 feet. The creature is affected as if by a *dominate monster* spell (Will save DC 10 + class level + Charisma modifier). The spell uses the master of the secret sound's total character level as the caster level.

Intensify Volume (Su): By manipulating magic like it was sound, a 9th-level master of the secret sound can adjust a spell's potency. Any spell that allows for a saving throw is intensified so that the DC of the saving throw is increased by +1.

The Secret Sound (Sp): Once per day, a 10th-level master of the secret sound can speak the entire secret sound as a full-round action. The secret sound can replicate any single spell effect of 9th-level or below. The spell uses the master of the secret sound's total character level as the caster level.

Requirements

To qualify to become a master of the secret sound, a character must fulfill all of the following criteria.

Knowledge (arcana): 5 ranks.
Listen: 5 ranks.
Perform: 8 ranks.
Spellcraft: 5 ranks.
Feats: Alertness.
Spellcasting: Must be able to cast 5th-level spells, five of the spells available to the character must be either sonic or language-dependent.
Special: The master of the secret sound must undergo a secret ritual every time she gains a new level, in which she is taught another portion of the secret sound. Only at 10th level does she know and fully understand the entire sound.

Master of the Secret Sound Class Skills

The master of the secret sound's class skills (and the key ability for each) are:

Str:–
Dex:–
Con: Concentration.
Int: Alchemy, Knowledge (arcana), Scry, Spellcraft.
Wis: Innuendo, Listen, Profession.
Cha: Perform.

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.

HIT DIE
D6

Master of the Secret Sound Advancement

Lvl	Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special	Spells per day/Spells known
1	+0	+0	+0	+2	*Sound of stunning*	+1 level of existing class
2	+1	+0	+0	+3	Intensify frequency	
3	+1	+1	+1	+3	*Sound of shielding* 1/day	+1 level of existing class
4	+2	+1	+1	+4	*Partial vibration shift* 1/day	
5	+2	+1	+1	+4	Alter modulation	+1 level of existing class
6	+3	+2	+2	+5	*Sound of destruction, sound of shielding* 2/day	
7	+3	+2	+2	+5	*Total vibration shift, partial vibration shift* 2/day	+1 level of existing class
8	+4	+2	+2	+6	*Sound of controlling*	
9	+4	+3	+3	+6	Intensify volume, *sound of shielding* 3/day	+1 level of existing class
10	+5	+3	+3	+7	*The secret sound, partial vibration shift* 3/day, *total vibration shift* 3/day	+1 level of existing class

Guild Secrets

The Flame of Destiny

by Andy Collins – illustrated by Todd Harris

Introducing epic-level play into your campaign can be done in a number of different ways, and the *Epic Level Handbook* presents a variety of ways to do so. For DMs who feel that advancing to epic levels requires something more than the accumulation of experience points, the Flame of Destiny organization presented in this article provides a great campaign tool.

The Flame of Destiny, also called "The Guardians," is a collection of powerful beings who watch over the "threshold" between the epic and non-epic. Those who would achieve so-called epic power must first contend with the Guardians and prove their mettle and worth.

Not all of the Guardians are epic-level characters. In fact, only the secret masters of the organization have actually advanced beyond 20th level. Most of those who safeguard the Flame of Destiny are merely foot soldiers—although no army has ever seen such awesome individual might—or characters being groomed as eventual replacements for their secret masters.

You can base the Flame of Destiny anywhere in your campaign world, although the organization works best in a metropolis or similarly sized city. (The information here assumes that the Flame of Destiny is based in a metropolis; adjust this according to your needs.) Of course, the Guardians have informants everywhere—the better to track up-and-coming beings of power—but most of their operations are centralized.

Organization Size and Resources

Numbering an even 100 members at all times, the Flame of Destiny is a minor organization in regards to its actual size. Despite its size, however, it commands significant resources and can afford to spend up to 50,000 gp per week on any one item or in pursuit of any specific objective.

In addition, individual members of the organization are able to bring even greater resources to bear, if circumstances demand it. The masters of the Flame of Destiny have personal fortunes in the hundreds of thousands of gold pieces, although much of this wealth is tied up in equipment and property.

Organization Alignment and Leadership

The Flame of Destiny is neutral in its outlook. It values no particular set of morals or ethics above any other, being devoted purely and entirely to the cause.

Individual members can and do vary from this neutrality, although most have at least a component of neutral in their alignment. All agree to set aside personal biases when judging those who come before them. Those

Creating Epic Organizations

To craft an organization that includes epic-level characters, you must tweak the numbers given in Tables 6 and 7 in the organization building guidelines presented in "Secret Societies" in *Dragon* 296. One simple method is just to add +10 to the highest-level character of each class, and then determine the rest of the levels accordingly.

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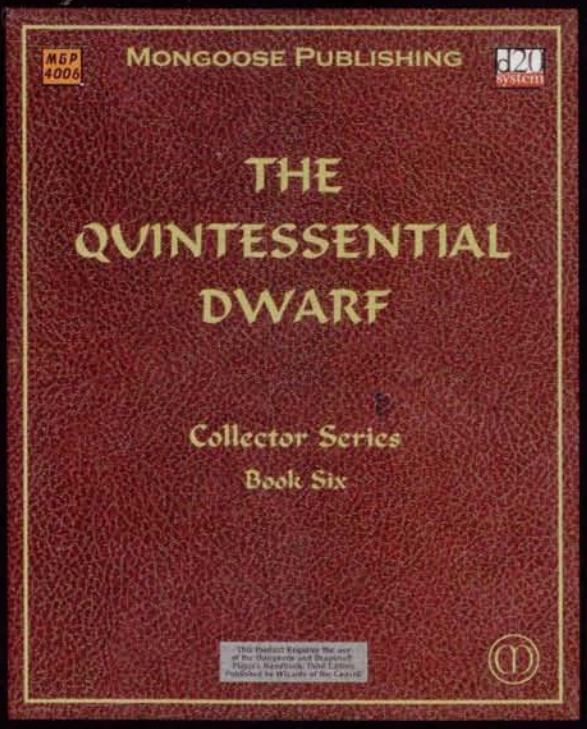

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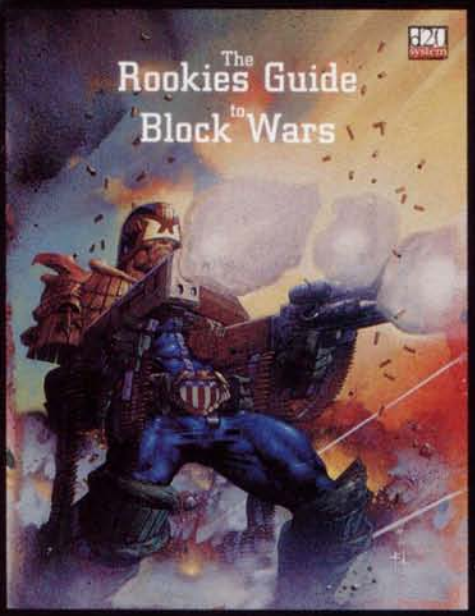

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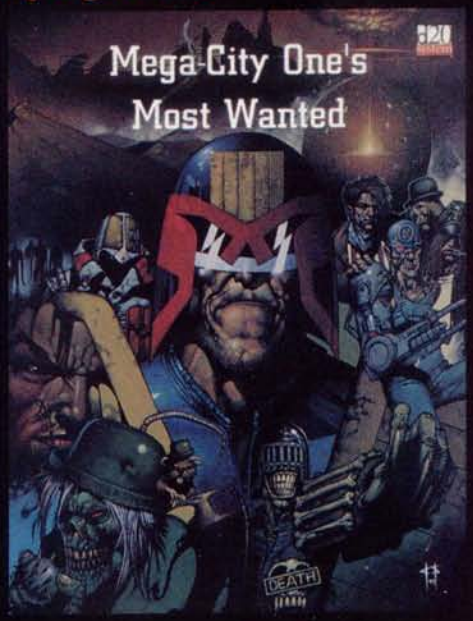


with strong personal codes of conduct (such as paladins), or those who work poorly in organizations (such as barbarians) rarely find the Guardians' outlook to their liking.

If the Flame of Destiny can be said to have a leader, it would be Korden Steelwatch (male dwarf Ftr26). Korden's patience, attention to detail, and thoughtfulness are legendary among the other Guardians. All those within the organization know that Korden doesn't crave personal power but seeks only to carry out the needs of the Flame of Destiny.

Organization Membership and Demographics

The Flame of Destiny is a highly integrated organization, with members of many classes and races making up its population.

Wizards are most common among the Guardians, although whether this suggests an organizational bias or merely that wizards are more likely to crave the power of epic levels is uncertain. The highest-ranking of the thirty-seven wizards in the Flame of Destiny is Aneiryn (male elf Wiz20/Lor4), one of the so-called "secret masters" of the Flame of Destiny. His chosen pupil is Megaera (female human Wiz12 [Evo]), a powerful spellcaster in her own right. Many other wizards serve the Guardians in various capacities, including two 6th-level wizards, four 3rd-level wizards, and 29 1st-level wizards.

The Guardians number twenty fighters among their membership. Korden Steelwatch is the oldest and most advanced fighter in the organization, and he serves as a grandfatherly figure to others in the group. Wogar the Terrible (male half-orc Ftr13) serves as a personal bodyguard to Megaera. Other fighters serve as devoted protectors or soldiers, including two 6th-level fighters, four 3rd-level fighters, and a dozen 1st-level fighters.

Rogues make up the third-most prevalent class, numbering eighteen. Ketta (female halfling Rog22) takes great pride at her ability to bypass even the most secure areas in the world. Her most prized pupil is Cedras (male human Rog7/Sha4), and she worries that her bias toward Cedras might color her judgment at a later date. Two 5th-level rogues, four 2nd-level rogues, and 10 1st-level rogues serve as the eyes and ears of the organization.

With their vast stores of lore, the ten bards in the Flame of Destiny occupy important roles. Kyria (female half-elf Brd25) might be one of the most well-read and knowledgeable individuals on the planet. Her current pupil, Venye (male drow elf Brd12) secretly plots to take her place among the secret masters. Kyria's eye has also been drawn recently to a dashing skald named Zander (human male Brd4/Bbn2). Other bards within the Guardians include one 6th-level bard, four 3rd-level bards, and a pair of 1st-level bards.

The contingent of sorcerers within the Flame of Destiny is led by Deverau (male human Sor21), self-styled Master of the Storm. He dallies with Vayshora (female aasimar Sor10) but secretly believes that she doesn't deserve membership in the Guardians. Two 5th-level sorcerers and three 2nd-level sorcerers round out this group.

The Flame of Destiny includes five druids, one of each permissible alignment. Whether this is by the organization's choice, due to some secret compact with the druidic lords or powers of nature, or simply happenstance is unknown even to most members. Uani Aelnor (female gnome Drd22, NG) is the highest-ranking druid, although Hsessek (male lizardfolk Drd11, N) has a surprisingly strong voice within the Guardians. A trio of 5th-level druids occupy the remaining neutral alignments.

Perhaps surprisingly, only a single cleric belongs to the organization: Mathias (male human Clr14 of Law). This may simply be due to the fact that many clerics who reach the pinnacle of worldly power turn instead to their deities, becoming semi-divine beings rather than pursuing epic power in its own right.

Rounding out the group are Arlen (female human Mnk13) and Reswald (male human Rgr12). Both see themselves as outsiders, although Reswald is actively seeking to change that status by allying himself with Hsessek.

In Your Campaign

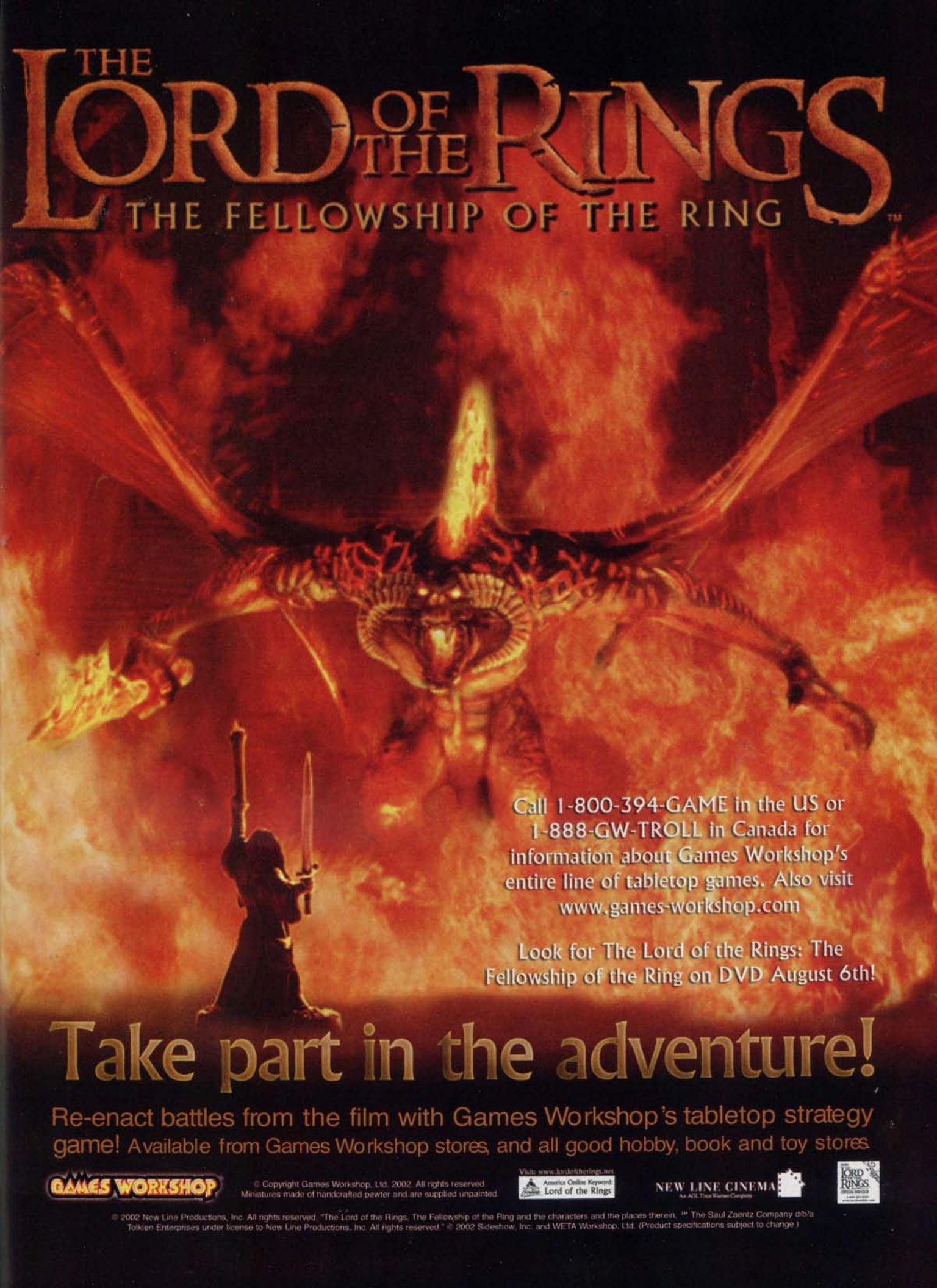
When including the Flame of Destiny in your campaign, you must decide its ultimate purpose. Do those in the organization seek merely to maintain their own power over lesser creatures? If so, they should seem an arrogant and jealous bunch, concerned with nothing more than their own status.

Maybe the Guardians serve as gatekeepers to a higher power still, one that fears mortal beings ascending to its lofty position. In that case, members of the organization might or might not have full control over their actions. If not, they might often be forced to choose between their master's desires and their own feelings.

Perhaps the Flame of Destiny serves as a kind of cosmic "proving ground," allowing only those who are worthy to ascend beyond the earthly realms so that at the end of time, when the universe faces final destruction, only the most powerful defenders will stand to defend it. This might be the most terrifying possibility, but also one of the most exciting to introduce into your campaign. In this scenario, those who decide whether potential candidates for epic power are allowed to ascend must put aside personal biases in order to safeguard all of creation. Such a task must inevitably breed feelings of isolation, perhaps even despair, as the secret masters become aloof but tragic (and almost certainly unappreciated) heroes.

Ultimately, only the lords of the Flame of Destiny (and the DM) truly know the reasoning behind their guardianship. In any case, their purpose is similar: to prevent those who are unworthy from attaining epic levels. In most cases, they carry this out covertly, by quietly working to frustrate or hamper a character's ascension. This might take the form of limiting a character's access to power or might simply be an encouragement to seek more worldly goals, such as ruling a kingdom or guild rather than continuing to amass power.

Rarely, the Flame of Destiny chooses to actively interfere with a potential epic character's ascension. This could take the form of warnings, threats, or even personal challenges by the secret masters. For instance, a 20th-level druid seeking to achieve 21st level might get a visit from Uani, who warns him to turn back or face the wrath of "powers greater than you can imagine." If the candidate ignores these warnings, Uani might well challenge him to a battle. Winning would signal his readiness to move on to epic levels.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Of course, the farseeing Guardians might simply know that a particular PC, or group of PCs, is destined for epic greatness and decide to begin evaluating them long before the PCs even suspect that such greatness exists.

As to what constitutes proof of worthiness, that too is in the hands of the DM. Certainly the characters must have proven their might over and over again to reach 20th level, but that isn't enough for the Flame of Destiny. Additional epic quests, oaths not to interfere with worldly matters, even great personal sacrifices might all be required of potential candidates for epicdom. Feel free to make as many requirements as you feel appropriate, but remember that the game should always continue to be fun and enjoyable for all involved. If you don't want epic-level characters in your game, you shouldn't tease the players with a possibility that isn't there.

Joining the Flame of Destiny

One possible requirement for would-be epic characters is that they must join the Flame of Destiny, at least for a time, after achieving 21st level. Perhaps new epic characters take the place of other secret masters, allowing those individuals to move on to even greater heights of power (or to retire, never again to be heard from by mortal beings). This provides an interesting angle for newly crowned epic characters: They must now search the world for others who seek to achieve similar heights.

It is also possible that characters might become involved with the Flame of Destiny even before reaching 20th level. Perhaps one of the secret masters notices the spark of potential power within a PC and chooses to groom that character for eventual passage into the epic realm. This might pit PCs against existing mid-ranking members, who don't want to give up their position of power and influence. D

Flame of Destiny

Flame of Destiny (minor): AL N; 50,000 gp resource limit; Membership 100; Integrated (human 30, elf 15, halfling 15, dwarf 15, half-elf 8, gnome 8, half-orc 5, other 4).

Authority Figures: Korden Steelwatch, male dwarf Ftr26.

Important Characters: Aneiryn, male elf Wiz20/Lor4; Megaera, female human Wiz12 (Evo); Wogar the Terrible, male half-orc Ftr13; Ketta, female halfling Rog22; Cedras male human Rog7/Sha4; Kyria, female half-elf Brd25; Venye male drow elf Brd12; Zander human male Brd4/Bbn2; Deverau male human Sor21; Vayshora female aasimar Sor10; Uani Aelnor, female gnome Drd22; Hsessek, male lizardfolk Drd11; Mathias, male human Clr14 (law); Arlen, female human Mnk13; Reswald, male human Rgr12.

Others: Mixed; Wiz6 (2), Wiz3 (4), Wiz1 (29), Ftr6 (2), Ftr3 (4), Ftr1 (12), Rog5 (2), Rog2 (4), Rog1 (10), Brd6 (1), Brd3 (4), Brd1 (2), Sor5 (2), Sor2 (3), Drd5 (3).

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Lost places, familiar haunts,
and strange sites in the lands of Faerûn

The Talntower

by Ed Greenwood · Illustrated by David Day

One is seldom far from drinkable water in the Sword Coast North—though that water might often be frozen. Phaeraeze, an ancient elven dialect of the Sword Coast lands, gave the lands north of the River Delimbiyr a name that translates as "land of water, rock, and tree." There are, however, places in the North where water is scarce or seeking it (in goblin-haunted rock clefts or deep woods) might prove perilous.

In several such locales, ancient but still-operating dwarven works aid travelers. At Axe Rock (a prominent, uninhabited crag that serves as a wayfarer's landmark on the north side of the Evermoor Way, two days' travel west of Everlund), a spring is guided down from high rocks along smooth, carved channels to fill a roadside pond. In scores of places across the North, small basins have been hollowed out of roadside boulders to hold rainwater or spring melt water for easy use of passersby.

At least one far grander dwarven water-work remains: the Talntower, a trail-side water storage tower that stands on the west side of a back-country trail two days north of Beliard.

How the Talntower gained its name or precisely which dwarves built it is lore now lost to passing time (one can hear many competing tales about the origins of the tower, but nothing definite). Some say "Taln" was a dwarf or even a dwarven king. Some claim he was an infamous stone giant slain by dwarves at the site; others say he was a gargantuan creature turned to stone to form some of the cliffs. Other tales say "Taln" is simply a remnant of the name of a dwarf clan or kingdom.

What Meets The Eye

The Talntower stands among vine-cloaked, scrub-covered rocks. More substantial and rugged hills rise behind it to the west. It looks like what it is: a jutting prow of natural stone that forms a cliff some 70 feet high—a prow that's been roofed over with a huge slab of rock.

This roof slab slopes down enough to the east to shed water, and it overlies a huge bowl the dwarves scooped out of the solid stone promontory. This bowl is an oval, perhaps 70 feet across at its widest extent and half that high. The bottom of the bowl is usually filled with 8 to 10 feet of water. The upper reaches of its sides are cracked in several places, some of these fissures being large enough for humans to climb through. Their presence means the bowl can't fill much more than 12 feet deep without spilling water out through some of the fissures; stains on the cliff's sides suggest that this has occurred more than once in the past.

Cold, drinkable spring water wells up through fissures in the bottom of the dwarf-sculpted bowl. It's obvious the builders dug down into the cliff around an existing spring to make a basin and then somehow transported a huge slab of hard local rock into place to roof their basin.

Except in the places where the natural fissures pierce them, the eastern arc of the bowl's walls are 8 to 12 feet thick. To its north, south, and west, the solid stone continues for at least a quarter of a mile. At one point in this arc, as close to the trail as the Talntower gets, the dwarves hollowed out two drains or cylindrical tunnels within the thickness of the walls. These drains run from inlets 4 to 6 feet up the basin walls and descend to a ground-level chamber inside the base of the cliff.

This small cave is cool enough to preserve food in summer and icy in winter, although its shelter is preferable to braving the howling snows of a winter blizzard.

Most of the cave's floor is taken up by a pool into which the water seeps before running away through another natural fissure in the ground. The pool is perhaps 16 feet long, 3 to 4 feet wide, and 4 feet deep. It usually holds a foot or more of water. Except in the coldest months of winter, when everything is frozen solid, spring water seeps continuously up through the fissures, down the drains, and into this pool.

This seepage can be increased to a torrent by moving one or both "plug stones" to open the drains. These plug stones are two huge slabs of stone, each roughly the size of a human's burial casket and about a foot thick. Fashioned with projecting handles, they are laid on smooth beds with walkways on either side for the use of persons seeking to move the stones.

The beds and walkways are reached by climbing broad stone steps cut into the walls of the cave (one up each wall, about 20 feet above the pool). In freezing conditions, the plugs are usually immobile, but at other times they can be readily moved. Although very heavy, they can be pulled forth by roughly the combined strength of three strong men and pushed back into place by four such men. So good were the dwarven stonecutters that the plugs can almost entirely shut off the water flow.

Even if the plug stones are left out, the bowl retains at least 4 feet of water, and the natural flow from the Underdark brings water down the open drains at about the rate of a small mountain spring.

No one guards or inhabits the Talntower, though travelers are warned that goblins, orcs, and sometimes more fearsome predatory monsters often lurk in the vicinity, watching for prey. Useful to generations of travelers, the water tower would remain no more than a little-known curiosity if it wasn't haunted.

The Rasping Spirit

For at least the last 120 years, the cave in the base of the ancient dwarven water tower has been haunted by a rasping voice that many folk consult as an oracle.

If offerings are left on the floor of the cave or on two flat seating areas that bulge out from the wall of the pool—but not in the pool itself—the Rasping Spirit often speaks, in a hissing whisper that echoes around the cave, answering questions put to it. When offerings are given but no queries are uttered, it almost always speaks on topics of its own choosing rather than remaining silent.

The Spirit Speaks

Here are some recently recorded oracular utterances. No comments or attempts at explanation or to identify recipients are provided here. It should be noted that many who consult the oracle keep its replies (and even their visits) secret, so these sayings might by no means be representative. For the same reasons, it's not known if the Rasping Spirit has ever said the same thing to different petitioners. Those who make additional offerings and ask for explanations of earlier utterances always receive very cryptic explanations.

- "The blade shall be taken up, a throne overthrown, and the son shall scorn the father."
- "Through rains of blood the falcon rises, fighting storms of arrows and swooping dragons, to perch at last atop the tower."
- "The sword shall be found but the ring lost."
- "A new king comes, and his badge shall be an axe in flames, and blood will run in rivers in a city of the north. Dragons will awaken and fight each other in the skies, and long-hidden magic will take fire and shake thrones."
- "Two dragons shall have daughters who pass among men and seem as human as babes born of women, and of their blood shall come in time a clan of humans who fly and take no harm from dragon breath or dragon spell. They shall seek thrones, and Faerûn shall be changed."
- "Kingdoms shall arise where only the bones of realms lie now, new crowns shall glitter, and red war shall rule many lands. Dwarves and elves shall have new realms of their own, but a great land shall fall."
- "A sorceress shall arise in Luskan to shake the many-turreted tower and make her own way. Adventurers shall flock to her banner, and she shall go down from the sun to claim a buried city long left to crawling things."
- "The hand of the loremaster will find the hidden way when all other remedies fail."
- "Forged in fire, hidden in tombs, it waits yet. When the sun pierces the dark dome, look for its awakening. Those not armed against it will fall swiftly."
- "Beware the black flame. It burns but consumes not, watches and sleeps not, and those who bear its mark are your foes forever."
- "Halamar is the one to watch. His sword shall strike the forge when the dragon falls from the sky and the waves overwhelm an abandoned ship." D

In Your Campaign

Using an "Elminster's Guide" article in your game is easy. Simply switch the names of groups and individuals so they suit your campaign or come up with some new scenarios for how the elements of the article work together. Here are some ideas:

- Perhaps in your campaign the Rasping Spirit is a true ghost. In life this tortured soul was an oracle who used her knowledge of the future for personal gain. Now she is forced to reveal hints of future disasters until someone uses her prediction to stop the events.
- The creatures responsible for the Rasping Spirit could be any other race or monster. Maybe the Talntower is inhabited by a mischievous demon that makes dire predictions of misfortune and then causes them to come true; thus, it proves its worth and causes more creatures to bring it offerings.
- In your campaign, there might not be a Rasping Spirit. Perhaps the Talntower is famous for its healing waters, or maybe it is rumored to hide the tomb complex of the dwarves who built it.

Elminster's Notes

Many folk of the North (even Harpers and other worldly folk who should know better) trust in the Rasping Spirit of the Talntower. Some believe it's a wizard bound beyond death, or the voice of one god or other, and others care not what's behind it, nor want to know—but seek out and heed its utterances.

It falls to me here to spoil their faith in the guiding oracle: It's no wise or divine guide at all, but a fraud perpetrated by a resident gnome family who take care to keep themselves hidden.

For generations the hardy Elhaembroe have dwelt in extensive chambers cut by the dwarves inside the rocky promontory that contains the water-tower. The bulk of these chambers lie a good quarter-mile westward of the cave and the water-bowl above it, but a long passage (that rises and falls several times to guard against being flooded if the bowl should shatter or the spring water be redirected) joins them to a spy chamber low in the walls of the cave. Anyone sitting in the spy chamber can see and hear beings in the cave through a few tiny spy holes, and they can speak through a curving tunnel cut through the rock to join with these spy holes in a way that magnifies speech. Various elder Elhaembroe steal into this chamber when the cave has visitors, and if they see offerings being left, will "play oracle" for a time.

Offerings, of course, become the property of the gnomes after the visitors depart. The rugged hills west of the Talntower sport several well-concealed entrances to the Elhaembroe complex. The doors closing these entrances are large roll-stones set in carved grooves, and the thresholds within are guarded by snares and traps designed to prevent snakes, skunks, and other small wild creatures from readily roaming the gnomes' caverns. Their home consists of at least six large granary chambers, ten isolated prison caverns walled off from the rest of the complex by stout iron bars, a kitchen with an entrance out into a small hole in the rocks where an outdoor stone oven can handle cooking and the smoking of meats, and dozens of small sleeping-chambers and nooks with high, hidden storage or ambush ledges.

When not pretending to be the Rasping Spirit, Elhaembroe gnomes hunt and forage in the nearby countryside, snaring beasts via extensive traplines and whittling scrounged wood into trade goods and novelties for sale in Beliard. They have been raised to be quiet and covert at all times, frequently looking around to see if they are observed. So far as I know, none of them have become adventurers or achieved any prominence in skills beyond archery, knowledge of nature, and whittling. They take care not to sell or barter recognizable offerings in Beliard, storing them in their extensive caves or trading them to certain gnome peddlers for sale in Waterdeep.

While none of the Elhaembroe are guilty of copying and modifying prophecies and predictions set forth by other sources, they have, down the years, become adept at crafting utterances that sound both perceptive and plausible. So far as I'm aware, none of them feels divine inspiration or influence when devising what the Rasping Spirit says.

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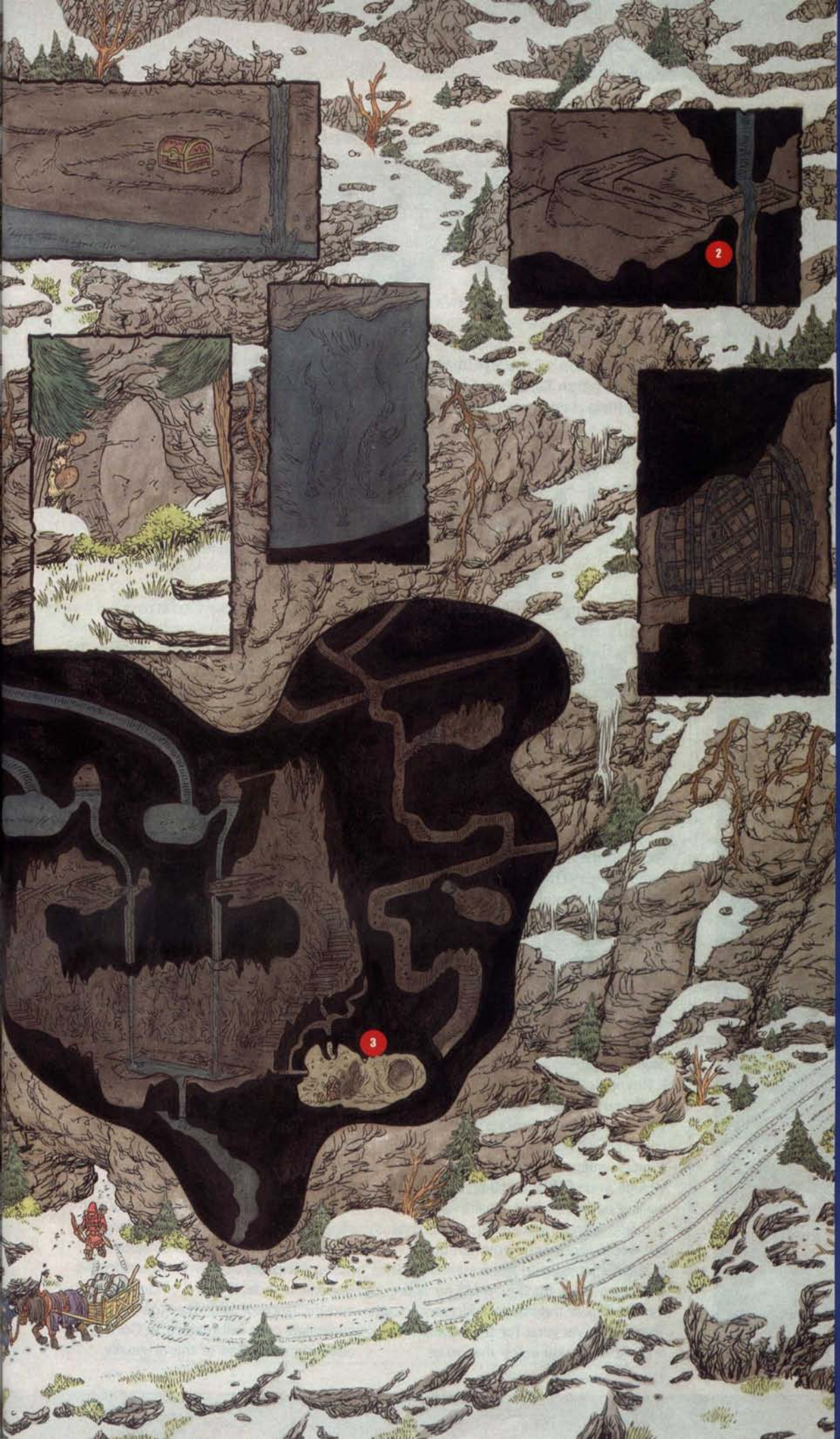


The Talntower

1. Natural fissures, widened by ice expansion each winter, are large enough to permit humans and smaller creatures to climb into and out of the water-bowl. Doing so requires a Climb check (DC 10).

2. The stone plugs can be pulled out with a successful Strength check (DC 16) and pushed back in with another Strength check (DC 18). In winter, the plugs are impossible for most humans to move without aid (Strength check, DC 27), and doing so releases only a small stream of water.

3. The spy holes that permit hidden beings to masquerade as the Rasping Spirit can be discovered with a successful Search check (DC 30), but they are not necessarily revealed as the source of the whispering unless the searcher happens to have an ear to the spy holes while a gnome is speaking. A successful Listen check while the Rasping Spirit is speaking (DC 35) reveals the spy holes as the true source of the noise.

Issue Number Thirteen • Wealsun, 592 sc

Living Greyhawk™ Journal

A Publication of the RPGA Network
Editor: Erik Mona • Campaign Director: Stephen Radney-MacFarland
Enlightenment can penetrate even the helm of iron—Cuthbertine proverb

New Adventures

Think your character's tough? Test your mettle against these new adventures by ordering them from www.rpga.com.

COR 2-04: *Birthday Bash*
By Kevin Freeman
Carnival time arrives in Istivin as the people celebrate a local landowner's birthday, and everyone is invited! What fun and games await those who show up for the festivities? An adventure for characters level 3-12. The first adventure in the *Gloom and Disunion* cycle. This adventure is available now.

ADP 2-02: *Scent of a Demon*
By Nicholas K. Tulach
Hot on the trail of the vile Nzevorikin, you are called upon to investigate some hideous crimes. Can you follow the trail of carnage and root out the unspeakable presence in this town? Part 2 of the *Your Worst Nightmare* series, which began in *Plea from Beyond the Grave*. An adventure for characters level 3-8. This adventure is available now.

COR 2-06: *Finders Keepers*
By Chris Lindsay and Matt Lovell
One part earth, two parts flame, step into darkness where we all scream the same.

CAMPAIGN NEWS

Living Greyhawk Journal #5 Finally Rescued from Oblivion

Long-suffering Greyhawk fans have much to cheer about with the release of the *Living Greyhawk Journal* #5, the final "stand-alone" issue of the magazine (originally slated to appear last summer). The magazine has been sent to everyone who was an RPGA member in August, 2001, when the issue was originally scheduled for release.

The long-awaited issue contains a "state of the campaign" address from campaign director Stephen Radney-MacFarland, a survey of the Clerkburg neighborhood of the city of Greyhawk by Erik Mona and Denis Tetreault, an immense overview of the Sultanate of Zeif by *Living Greyhawk Gazetteer* co-author Frederick Weining, and information about four more monsters straight from the slab of the inquisitive Fiend-Sage of Rel Astra (as translated by Sean K Reynolds).

If you're owed an issue and have not yet received one, contact Tim Kelley at rpgahq@wizards.com, and he'll send out a replacement immediately (be sure to include your RPGA number and current mailing address in the email).

If you weren't a member at the time but would like a copy anyway, don't despair! Members in good standing may order the issue for $5.00 US by contacting Tim at the above address. Thanks to everyone for their patience, and we hope you enjoy the issue!

New Magic Item Creation Rules are Live

The Circle has reworked the adjudication of magic item creation to more closely match that detailed in the Dungeons & Dragons Core Rules. Now, instead of gaining gold for your character through magic item creation, you create individual items. Items you are able to craft are dictated by your magic item creation feats, and the ability to gather the item's published prerequisites. Check out the new rules in the newest version of Rules Update 2: Beyond the Core Rules, found on the Living Greyhawk homepage (www.living-greyhawk.com). These rules also include a special log sheet so you can track your creation history. These rules went into effect worldwide on May 15, 2002.

Adaptable Adventures Discontinued

Scent of a Demon, the latest Adaptable adventure by Nicholas K. Tulach, is the last Adaptable adventure for the Living Greyhawk campaign. While an interesting experiment, the RPGA Network has decided to discontinue the Adaptable adventure format in order to supply DMs and players with a larger number of Core adventure releases (adventures set in non-Triad-controlled regions such as the city of Greyhawk and the lands of Iuz). The 592 CY campaign year will feature 18 Core adventures instead of the originally

slated 12. The Yyear 593 CY (2003) and future campaign years will feature 20 Core adventures in addition to the usual compliment of Regional adventures. Stay tuned to these pages and the RPGA Network website (**www.rpga.com**) for the titles and release dates of the rest of this year's LIVING GREYHAWK Core adventures.

Official Changes to Adventure Certificates

In the interest of more clear and concise reward tracking, we've made some changes to the way players track their wealth and equipment on the LIVING GREYHAWK Adventure Certificate. Instead of tracking total value and coin value, players now track equipment wealth and coin wealth. The equipment value is the total worth of the magic and mundane equipment your character carries, while the coin value is the total gold piece worth of currency, gems, and jewelry that your character carries. When you sell a piece of equipment, you subtract the total market value of the item from the equipment value and add half of that value to the coin value. When you buy equipment, you subtract the total market value of the item from the coin value and add the total market value to the equipment value. Version 3 of Rules Update 3: Adventure Certificates features these changes. That Rules Update can be found on the LIVING GREYHAWK homepage (**www.livinggreyhawk.com**).

Non-Regional DM Requirements Relaxed

In October of last year, the RPGA announced the policy that a DM must live in the associated region in order to run a LIVING GREYHAWK Regional adventure based in that region. Because this is a burden to larger conventions that sometimes need to recruit DMs from outside their region to support higher levels of game play, we've decided to relax this rule. Convention-size events (25 tables or higher) can have out-of-region DMs run regional events, but smaller events (home games, game days, and retail events) cannot.

Primate playmates like this dakon await you in the finally published LIVING GREYHAWK Journal #5!

It's a recipe for evil, but who wins the prize? Just step inside the door, and don't close your eyes. An adventure for characters level 2-10. This adventure premieres at the 2002 Origins Games Expo.

COR 2-07: *Ashes of Innocence*
By David Christ
Towns near the southern border of the domain of Greyhawk City are being ravaged by fire. Rumors abound of people exploding into flames while talk of a creature of black flame becomes more common further east toward Safeton. The only link between the burnt towns so far is an old Raoan cleric traveling toward the eastern horizon with a small boy. No one has caught up with them so far, and, even more strangely, none have even dared to try. An adventure for characters level 3-10. This adventure premieres at the 2002 Origins Games Expo.

COR 2-08: *Echo*
By Stephen Radney-MacFarland
Concerned by stories of the resurfacing of the Isles of Woe, the archmage Warnes Starcoat sponsors an expedition into the Brass Hills to explore a site called the Zochal. According to the Nesser Opuscule, the only surviving fragment of a greater work attributed to the legendary Tzunk, the Zochal is an echo point for the planar confluence that infuses the once lost sunken isles. What does that mean? That is exactly what the Circle of Eight wants you to find out. An adventure for characters level 3-12. This adventure premieres at the 2002 Origins Game Expo.

What is LIVING GREYHAWK?

LIVING GREYHAWK is the largest, most popular shared-world DUNGEONS & DRAGONS campaign in the history of gaming. Run under the auspices of the RPGA Network (RPGA), the campaign offers gamers around the world the chance to contribute to the developing history of Oerth by playing specially constructed adventures at conventions, game days, or in the comfort of home. For more information on how you can get involved in the campaign, visit **www.livinggreyhawk.com**

CHAMPIONS of Vengeance

The Knights of the Chase

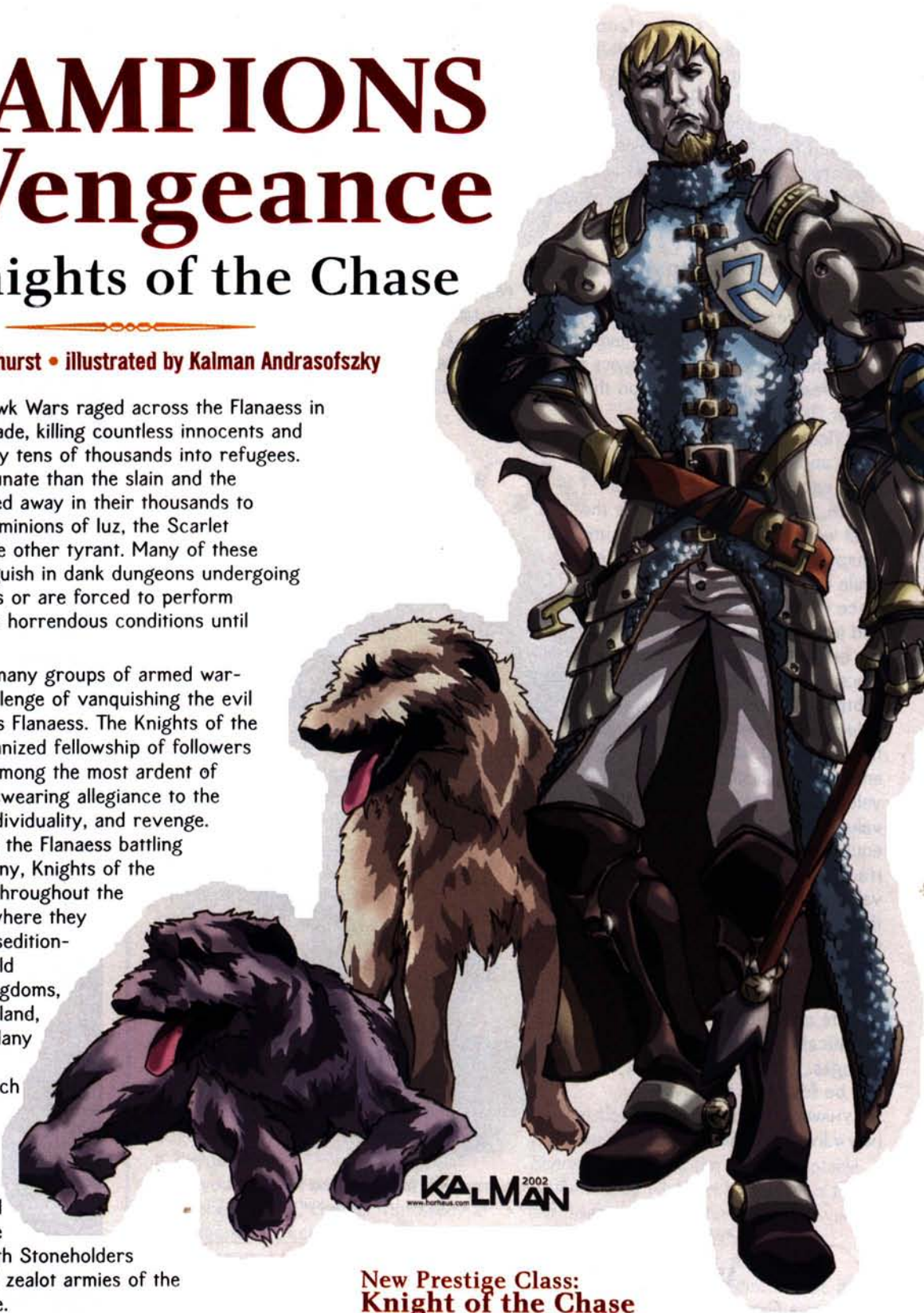
by Creighton Broadhurst • illustrated by Kalman Andrasofszky

The Greyhawk Wars raged across the Flanaess in the last decade, killing countless innocents and turning many tens of thousands into refugees. Those even less fortunate than the slain and the displaced were carried away in their thousands to unknowable fates by minions of Iuz, the Scarlet Brotherhood, or some other tyrant. Many of these unfortunates yet languish in dank dungeons undergoing indescribable tortures or are forced to perform backbreaking labor in horrendous conditions until they perish.

During this time, many groups of armed warriors rose to the challenge of vanquishing the evil stalking the post-wars Flanaess. The Knights of the Chase—a loosely organized fellowship of followers of Trithereon—rank among the most ardent of these organizations, swearing allegiance to the ideals of freedom, individuality, and revenge.

Active throughout the Flanaess battling oppression and tyranny, Knights of the Chase can be found throughout the old Great Kingdom (where they are often hanged as seditionists), Sunndi, Ratik, Old Almor, the Bandit Kingdoms, the Shield Lands, Keoland, and the Yeomanry. Many Knights of the Chase flock to free lands such as Furyondy, which offers a fairly stable base from which to attack the lands of Iuz. In ruined Tenh, members of the order war against both Stoneholders and the law-obsessed zealot armies of the Theocracy of the Pale.

Iuz and the Scarlet Brotherhood currently serve as the main foci of the order's wrath, though Knights of the Chase remain vigilant against the rise of smaller threats and petty despots. They also distrust many good- and neutral-aligned religions that espouse the tenets of law, order, and conformity over the expression of individual thought or vigilante justice.



New Prestige Class: Knight of the Chase

The Knights of the Chase are loosely organized into a knighthood made up exclusively of fanatical followers of Trithereon the Summoner, Oerth's god of individuality, liberty, retribution, and self-defense. Most knights come from the ranks of wronged clerics or fighters, although some rangers (and even a few rogues) have joined the fellowship. Members of other classes are welcome within the

order, though rare. Due to the usually unhappy circumstances surrounding their birth, many half-orcs and half-elves find themselves attracted to the order.

Most knights work and travel alone, although on some occasions, small groups of Chasers have acted in concert to rid the Flanaess of would-be oppressors. Such groups rarely stay together long, as the highly individualistic, chaotic personalities of the members are seldom conducive to long-term teamwork.

As befits the chaotic nature of its members, the Order of the Chase was for many years an informal organization dedicated to following Trithereon's liberating doctrine. The order organized itself into its current incarnation during the series of conflicts that marked the eastward retreat of the Great Kingdom after the independence of Nyrond in the late 350s CY. Three knights of the order took the field in the legendary Battle of a Thousand Banners in 447 CY, and Chasers have stood watch along the eastern border of Almor since the foundation of that realm.

In the West, the order first gained popularity among those opposed to Keoish expansion. As the Throne of the Lion's interest in its neighbors waned, the resident Chasers (typical for Trithereonites) flocked to the southern borders to protect local folk from the depravities of the slave-taking Sea Princes.

Today, individual knights mete out justice and vengeance as they see fit. No official hierarchy exists within the order, though most members defer to the views of experienced Chasers. All recognize the authority of senior clerics of Trithereon, and the church's tacit support of what many consider a terrorist organization has led to a great deal of tension between Trithereonite superiors and the leaders of their resident communities. Though most temple clerics deny a strong correlation between their belief and the knighthood, membership in the Order of the Chase comes only through invitation by senior clerics of the Summoner, usually as recognition of the individual's dedication to liberty and vengeance.

Though the order's support structure remains a poorly guarded secret, the knights themselves seldom take precaution against detection. Most knights clad themselves in distinctive blue chainmail emblazoned with a metallic rune of pursuit (Trithereon's holy symbol) across the chest. Most Chasers choose a silver color for this device, but particularly devout or powerful knights often favor gold. Like their divine patron, most Knights of the Chase travel with one or more animal companions. Members of the order favor the longsword and shortspear, with many naming their favored weapons in homage to Trithereon.

Wanderers all, Knights of the Chase travel the Flanaess fighting oppression and freeing those who are enslaved or held for no just cause. As wanderers they own only what they carry, but many bear extra weapons to gift to those in need.

Many Chasers travel with sleek, swift dogs well trained in the arts of hunting and warfare. These hounds, known as Nemoud's Brethren, are specially selected and trained at centers of Trithereonite worship and share a special bond with proven members of the order. Particularly accomplished knights may call upon the services of intelligent hawks known collectively as Harrukin. No one outside the order knows how the Chasers come by these majestic beasts. Some suggest that the Summoner himself dispatches a Harrukin when one of his favored knights has earned its companionship through word and deed.

Knights of the Chase are highly individualistic, devoted folk used to acting on their own initiative to right the wrongs of the world. Merciless opponents, they relentlessly hunt those who have earned their ire. Chasers rarely turn over apprehended transgressors. Instead, each knight deals with his captives as he sees fit. Within the order's infrequent counsels, actions most definitely speak louder than words, and decisions are made swiftly and without mercy.

The order's legendary disregard for the laws and customs of civilized lands often brings knights into conflict with local rulers eager to defend their authority. Since the knights represent a destabalizing influence upon the downtrodden and desperate, few in positions of authority appreciate the meddling of a Chaser in pursuit of his prey.

Hit Dice: d8

Requirements

To qualify to become a Knight of the Chase, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Alignment: Chaotic good.

Base Attack Bonus: +6.

Handle Animal: 4 ranks.

Ride: 4 ranks.

Feats: Weapon Focus (longsword).

Special: The character must be an ardent worshiper of Trithereon who has performed some great undertaking in the name of his deity.

Class Skills

The Knight of the Chase's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are: Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Handle Animal (Cha), Intuit Direction (Wis), Knowledge (religion) (Wis), Profession (Wis), Ride (Dex), Swim (Str), and Wilderness Lore (Wis). See Chapter 4: Skills in the *Player's Handbook* for full descriptions of these skills.

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the Knight of the Chase prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: A knight is proficient in the use of all simple and martial weapons, all armors (heavy, medium, and light), and shields.

Spells per Day: A Knight of the Chase has the ability to cast a small number of divine spells from the cleric spell list (see *Player's Handbook*, page 160). To cast a spell, the Knight of the Chase must have a Wisdom score of at least 10 + spell level, so a Knight of the Chase with a Wisdom of 10 or lower cannot cast these spells. Knight of the Chase bonus spells are based on Wisdom, and saving throws against those spells have a DC of 10 + spell level + the Chaser's Wisdom modifier. When the Knight of the Chase gets 0 spells of a given level, such as 0 1st-level spells at 2nd level, he gets only bonus spells. A Knight of the Chase prepares and casts spells as a cleric does (though he cannot spontaneously cast *cure* or *inflict* spells).

Knight of the Chase Advancement

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Cleric Spells per Day 1st	2nd	3rd	4th
1st	+1	+2	+0	+0	Special hindrances, Track	—	—	—	—
2nd	+2	+3	+0	+0	Insight of vengeance	0*	—	—	—
3rd	+3	+3	+1	+1	Nemoud's brethren	1	—	—	—
4th	+4	+4	+1	+1		2	0*	—	—
5th	+5	+4	+1	+1	Flight of Krelestro	2	1	—	—
6th	+6	+5	+2	+2		3	2	0*	—
7th	+7	+5	+2	+2	Harrukin	3	2	1	—
8th	+8	+6	+2	+2		3	3	2	0*
9th	+9	+6	+3	+3		4	3	2	1
10th	+10	+7	+3	+3	*The doom of inescapable retribution*	4	3	3	2

*Provided the knight has sufficient Wisdom to have a bonus spell of this level.

Special Hindrances: A knight must always follow the Code of the Chase (see sidebar). Should a senior cleric of Trithereon determine that the knight has acted against the code, the character may not attain another level in this class until the senior cleric willingly casts *atonement* upon him. This usually involves a quest at the behest of the cleric's church, the difficulty of which greatly depends upon the seriousness of the Chaser's transgression.

Track: At 1st level, a knight gains Track as a bonus feat. If the knight already possesses the Track feat, he gains a +2 synergy bonus to associated skill checks instead.

Insight of Vengeance: When fighting with a longsword or shortspear, a knight gains a +1 insight bonus to attack rolls.

Nemoud's Brethren: At 3rd level, the knight gains the services of a specially selected hound. This hound is similar to a war dog, however it also gains abilities in a comparable fashion to a wizard's familiar (see the War Dog Special Abilities chart in this article and page 51 of the *Player's Handbook*). Nemoud's Brethren, however, do not grant their master any special powers (such as the toad's +2 Constitution bonus) in the way that familiars do. If the dog is slain, the knight gains no replacement until he has gained an additional level as a knight.

Flight of Krelestro (Su): Once per day a knight can affect a shortspear as if a *true strike* spell has been cast upon it. If the spear has previously been blessed by a cleric of The Vengeful One, its range increment is tripled. The act of imbuing a shortspear with the Flight of Krelestro is a move-equivalent action that provokes an attack of opportunity. The effect lasts until the spear is used in combat or for a number of rounds equal to the knight's class level, whichever occurs first.

Harrukin: At 7th level, the knight gains the services of an intelligent hawk. This bird has the basic characteristics of a hawk (as noted in the *Monster Manual*, page 197), and in addition gains further abilities in a similar fashion to a wizard's familiar (see the Harrukin Special Abilities chart below and page 51 of the *Player's Handbook*). Harrukin, however, do not grant their master any special powers (such as the weasel's +2 bonus on Reflex saves) in the way that familiars do. If the hawk is slain, the knight gains no replacement until he has gained an additional level as a knight.

War Dog Special Abilities

Knight Level	Natural AC	Int	Special
3	+1	6	Alertness, improved evasion, share spells, empathic link
4	+2	7	Touch
5-6	+3	8	Speak with master
7-8	+4	9	Speak with animals of its type
9-10	+5	10	—

The Doom of Inescapable Retribution (Sp): Only the most powerful of knights can invoke this ability, the power for which is said to come directly from Trithereon himself. Because of this, they use it sparingly and only against those who are guilty of denying others their freedom. In the past it has been inflicted upon dictators, brutal military officers, slaveholders, and high priests of certain highly lawful religions.

A Knight of the Chase can use this spell-like ability once per day. To invoke this power the knight must make a successful touch attack against his opponent while declaring: "In the name of The Summoner, I mark you!" If the attack is successful, the target must succeed at a Will save (DC = 10 + 1/2 the knight's Hit Dice + the knight's Wisdom bonus). The Doom of Inescapable Retribution has two main effects:

- The rune of pursuit is burnt into the forehead of the target. This process inflicts 2d8 points of fire damage upon the target. This effect occurs even if the subject made a successful saving throw.
- The target is subjected to a *mark of justice* spell as though cast by a cleric of the knight's character level.

Harrukin Special Abilities

Knight Level	Natural AC	Int	Special
7	+1	6	Alertness, improved evasion, share spells, empathic link
8	+2	7	Touch
9	+3	8	Speak with master
10	+4	9	Speak with animals of its type

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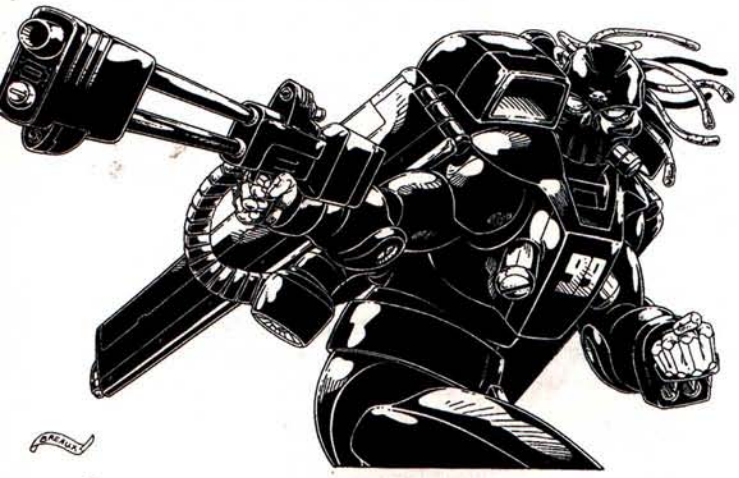

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The Code of the Chase

A knight of the chase never turns away from those in need of rescue or protection, as doing so is a mortal sin in the eyes of Trithereon. Knights live their lives by the following four principles:

Individuality—Live your life as you see fit as long as you act in the cause of good. Do not force your beliefs on others. Let your conscience guide you, but do not allow unbelievers to sway you. The end justifies the means.

Liberty—Freedom is an individual's greatest treasure, which should be safeguarded at all costs. Laws can be oppressive whether enacted for "good" or "evil." Those who oppress or enslave others should be persecuted without mercy. Unjust laws should be denounced and opposed wherever uncovered.

Retribution—Avenge yourself against those who have wronged you. Justice comes from the heart and can only be truly meted out by the persecuted. The law is often inadequate and should be ignored if it fails to dispense justice.

Self-Defense—All folk deserve the ability to defend themselves and their property. Those who cannot defend themselves should be protected so that they remain free. Killing another is justified if he wrongs you.

The most common behavior proscribed by a knight is the keeping of slaves. If the target already has slaves, he must release his slaves immediately, renounce slavery, and never keep slaves again or suffer the curse of the *mark of justuce*.

The *mark of justice* spell can be removed by the means outlined in the spell's description, but the rune of pursuit scar remains until the target is healed by a *heal* spell or atones for his misdeeds and receives the benefit of an *atonement* spell.

Notable Knights of the Chase

Dallrend Grasinen (Clr8/Ftr3/Knight of the Chase 5)
(AL CG; Str 16, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 15, Cha 14)
Deeply tanned, with close-cropped black-hued hair and eyes the color of steel, Dallrend is of obvious Oeridian descent. Stocky and still fit despite his advancing years, he has, if anything, become more merciless and reckless in his pursuit of transgressors.

A native of Chathold in Almor, Dallrend has fought for almost two decades against the incursions of the Great Kingdom; the Aerdi remain for him the culprits for all misfortunes and calamities that befell his land. Now that Almor has passed into history and his family's fate remains a mystery, he spends his time searching for his family and punishing any who seek to persecute his shattered homeland. Many within Nyrond's occupying forces consider Dallrend a hothead, but they respect him because he rescued several of their countrymen from slavers raiding the coastal areas of Old Almor.

Corquisavel Rusanthas (Rog1/Ftr5/Rgr1/Knight of the Chase 4)
(AL CG; Str 13, Dex 17, Con 13, Int 13, Wis 13, Cha 5)
Surprisingly (for a follower of Trithereon), this soft-spoken half-elf warrior is not given to acting on impulse. The offspring of an unhappy union between an olven warrior and an Oeridian wizardess, Corquisavel was born during 531 CY in northern Veluna. Corquisavel's mother died, a victim of marauding orcs in the southern Yatils, while he was a young child. His mother's killers discovered and tortured the infant, and would have killed him if not for the timely arrival of his father's brethren. (To this day he bares horrific facial scars gained from that encounter and still harbors a deep fear of fire). Corquisavel dwelt amongst his father's people for the next three decades, learning the ways of the forest and of war.

He has spent much of the intervening years scouring the Vesve and the Yatils, hunting down and brutally slaying all evil savage humanoids he comes across. He also has a particular distaste for followers of Pholtus, and is known to have slain obstreperous clerics of the Blinding Light.

Short for one of mixed human/olven heritage Corquisavel stands only 4 ft. 7 in. tall, but moves with a fluidity few can match. He wears his dark brown hair long while his eyes, a legacy of his father, are deep green in hue and seem to be able to weigh a man's innocence or guilt in a second.

Kelmur Trantis (Ftr7/Knight of the Chase 6)
(AL CG; Str 16, Dex 10, Con 15, Int 13, Wis 11, Cha 14)
Perhaps the best known of the knights currently battling the followers of the Scarlet Sign in the Headlands, Kelmur is thought to have personally slain two kesh and presided over the execution of a third. As a consequence he has been nicknamed by the rebels "The Scourge of the Scarlet Sign," and he is widely reviled by the occupying forces. Rumors suggest that Sister Kuranyie and Maranafel Toktot (the so-called "Butcher of Scant") have placed a substantial sum of gold on the head of this charismatic loner. Typical for a Chaser, Kelmur prefers to act alone and sometimes disappears into the Headlands for weeks at a time. Though the general populace loves him, some Onnwallish nobles (notably Baron Halshas Geldrenn) see the man as a dangerous rabble-rouser who gives the peasants ideas above their station.

A native of Nyrond, Kelmur sailed to Onnwal at the onset of the rebellion. A tall man, thought by many to be dashingly handsome, Kelmur has become a living symbol of resistance for many of the rebels who struggle against the Brotherhood.

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Command Points

Ghostwind Scenarios

by Rob Heinsoo

■ Battle for the weapons of the war god in the new Ghostwind Campaign.

The *Ghostwind Campaign* book contains rules for an extended DUNGEONS & DRAGONS CHAINMAIL campaign that allows your warband's leader to gain levels, new abilities, and magic items. It also contains twelve new exciting scenarios for your CHAINMAIL game. When you tire of those, you'll want to have this article handy, because below you'll find five more all-new Ghostwind scenarios.

The five scenarios presented here work best when introduced toward the middle or end of the *Ghostwind Campaign*. We suggest that if you randomly generate a scenario on Table 4-1 in the *Ghostwind Campaign* book and one or both of the players have already played that scenario during the campaign, consider rolling on the following table to generate a scenario you haven't played.

D20 Roll	Scenario
1-4	Brush War
5-8	Fear Wood
9-12	Stragglers to the Harvest
13-16	Betrayal
17-20	Wounded Warriors

Brush War

Scarred by ancient magic, broad sections of the Ghostwind Plateau are entirely covered by thorny shrubs. Two warlords hope that the inhospitable terrain might hide clues to Stratis's first treasure.

Environment: This is an above-ground scenario for two players. Use the rules for the Rapid Strike scenario from Set 3, *Fire and Ice,* with the exceptions listed below.

• Terrain: Each player places two pieces of terrain as normal. Aside from the terrain placed by the players, the entire board is considered covered in briars.

Players can opt to swap out their normal terrain choices for a section of clear terrain. Use the back of a cut-out quagmire (or some other mutually agreeable terrain) as a section of clear terrain. Once a player has placed a section of clear terrain, no other terrain can be placed on top of it.

Note that since briars have a -2" maximum movement penalty, most moves during the game will be at -2". Similarly, most ranged attacks will be against models that have +4 cover.

• Special Rule: To avoid entirely hosing dwarves and other models who have a speed of 3, the minimum move is 2" instead of 1" for this scenario.

• Rewards: The warlords guessed correctly when they surmised that the brush held treasures. The victor rolls once on Table 5-20: Wondrous Items in the *Ghostwind Campaign* book.

Fear Wood

A magic trap set by the Broadaxe tribe created such a fearsome slaughter that its effects still echo in this portion of the Ghostwind Plateau. The woods are still cursed with *fear* spells that affect living creatures and confusion magics that interfere with non-living creatures' senses.

Environment: This is an above-ground scenario for two players. Use the rules for the Rapid Strike scenario from Set 3, *Fire and Ice,* with the exceptions listed below.

• Terrain: This scenario contains an additional piece of terrain, a piece of wooded terrain, that must be placed touching the center of the board. The scouting player may choose whether he wishes to place that piece or whether he wants the other player to place it. Players each bring 3 other pieces of terrain to be placed normally after the wooded terrain is placed. However, the only legal terrain pieces are briars, hills, and woods. Players can replace illegal terrain with legal terrain choices before the battle.

• Special Rules: Within 3" of any wooded terrain, morale saves, saves against *fear* effects, and attempts to rally automatically fail 50% of the time.

■ Warlords struggle to retain leadership in the Betrayal scenario.

Roll a separate d20 whenever you make such a save. The save only succeeds if you roll 11+.

Within 3″ of any wooded terrain, non-living models (Undead and Constructs) gain the Unreliable ability if they do not already have that ability.

• Victory: In the fourth and subsequent rounds, victory goes to the first warband that starts and ends a round as the only warband with non-constrained and non-routing models touching the woods at the center of the board.

• Rewards: Some age-old warrior fled the field and left his prized weapon behind in the tangled woods. The winning player rolls once on Table 5-17: Weapons in the *Ghostwind Campaign* book.

Stragglers to the Harvest

In the chaotic conditions of the Godswar, command and control sometimes take second place to getting the job done yourself. In this scenario, the warlords arrive at the battle first, seeking to gather Stratis's Divine Sparks as best they can, while the rest of their warbands straggle onto the field.

Use the rules for the Blood Harvest scenario as detailed on pages 12-13 of *Blood and Darkness*, with the exceptions listed below.

• Special Rules: The only models that start the battle on the table are the two warlords. Only these warlords can give their side a scouting bonus, although Tactical Advantage still applies.

Before the battle, and at the end of each turn, the younger player rolls a d20 to determine the number of "stragglers." Both players add the result of that one roll to their personal reinforcement pool. The first time a player activates a model that turn, he must decide whether or not he wants to use his reinforcement pool to bring models from his warband onto the table.

If a player wants to bring one or more models onto the table that round, immediately reduce his reinforcement pool by the cost of the models he wishes to bring onto the table. He may place each newly arriving model anywhere he wishes within 1″ of his board edge, so long as the models are at least 3″ from any enemy models. The newly arriving models count as part of the player's warband that turn. For example, if you start the turn with just your warlord and two Dwarf Zealots in play, and then you use 10 points from your reinforcement pool to bring two Dwarf Legionnaires into play, this counts as having 5 models in play at the start of the turn, and you can activate two models at a time.

If a player chooses not to bring any models onto the table that round, or if his reinforcement pool isn't large enough to pay the cost of his models that are still out of play, the player plays that round with the forces he already has on the table.

• Victory: The victory condition in this scenario is the same as in a normal Blood Harvest game: Victory goes to the first player whose models can absorb 5 of the 9 Divine Sparks. But note that unlike any other CHAINMAIL game, a player can have no models on the table and still have a chance to win; the battle isn't over until 5 Sparks have been gathered by one player or all models from one side have entered the battle and been eliminated.

• Rewards: The rush of consuming one of Stratis's Divine Sparks is short-lived, but the victor can take consolation in the potion found near one of the Sparks. Roll once on Table 5-18: Potions in the *Ghostwind Campaign* book.

Betrayal

Thanks to the Broadaxe tribe's doomed defense against the Empire of Dragons, the Ghostwind Plateau is a maze of magic traps. In this section of the Plateau, traps cause subordinates to mutiny against their commanding officers. If your warlord can survive the gauntlet, you'll prove that you can stand where Stratis fell.

This scenario works best with 70- and 100-point warbands. If you are playing with 50-point warbands, reroll on the scenario chart above for a new scenario.

Environment: This is an aboveground scenario for two players.

Unless otherwise specified, use the rules for the Breakthrough scenario from the original CHAINMAIL set. The warlord is the attacker, trying to get his models off the opposite edge.

Instead of pitting two opposing warbands against one another, Betrayal pits a warlord and a few followers the warlord has been able to retain (played by one player) against the rest of that warband (played by his opponent).

The player with the higher score plays as the warlord for this scenario, while his opponent plays as the traitorous warband. See the Betrayal Warband Selection sidebar for more information on how to choose your warbands.

• Terrain: Use the warband's standard aboveground terrain. The scouting

Betrayal Warband Selection

The player who is playing the warlor chooses which models in his normal warband he wants to play with, up to a limit of 40 percent of the warband's total cost. If a warband has no models that cost less than the maximum, that warlord plays alone. The opposing player chooses her "traitorous" troops from the warlord player's warband; the only models used in this scenario are those from the warlord player's warband.

	Max. Cost of Warlord's Models	Traitorous Models
70-point battle	28 > points	42 < points
100-point battle	40 > points	60 < points

> = less than < = greater than

player places the first piece, then players take turns alternating.

• Victory: Unlike the standard Breakthrough scenario, the victory condition in the Betrayal scenario is determined by the survival of the warlord. If the warlord can move off the defender's board edge, the warlord player wins. This player also wins if he manages to eliminate all of the traitorous models. Otherwise, the player of the traitorous models wins.

• Rewards: victor's troops find magical armor belonging to a previously betrayed commander. Roll once on Table 5-16: Armor in the *Ghostwind Campaign* book.

Wounded Warriors

Warbands aren't always fighting at full strength. This scenario simulates a not-uncommon situation: Two warbands that have already been beat up in one combat seek to seize a momentary opportunity and find another enemy warband attempting the same trick.

Environment: This is an underground scenario for two players. Use the rules for the Rapid Strike scenario from Set 3, *Fire and Ice,* with the exceptions noted below.

• Set up: Before setting up, the oldest player rolls a d20 and consults the chart below to establish a wound count.

50-point battle: wound count = 5 + 1d20/2

70-point battle: wound count = 7 + 1d20/2

100-point battle: wound count = 10 + 1d20/2

Each player must place damage totaling the wound count on the models in their warbands, The damage may be placed in any manner a player chooses, with the following restrictions and options:

1. No single model can receive damage that reduces it to lower than half health.

2. Instead of placing one or more points of damage, a player can eliminate one spell from a spellcaster in his warband. A spell counts as a number of points of damage equal to the spell's level. Thus, a 0-level spell doesn't count for any damage, and each 2nd-level spell counts as 2 points of damage.

3. Instead of placing three points of damage, a ranged attacker with unlimited shots can be changed into a ranged attacker with only 1 shot.

4. If a player can no longer legally place damage, eliminate spells, or deplete ranged attackers' ammunition, the unapplied wound points are added to the opponent's Tactical Advantage for the scenario.

Note: Models that start the scenario having taken half-damage will not be vulnerable to making morale saves when they reach half health during the battle. Therefore, after you have finished assigning the wound count damage, make a save (DC 16) for every non-Fearless model that has been reduced to half-health. Models that fail the save take an extra point of damage. Models that are knocked down by this extra point of damage are eliminated.

Don't forget that the scouting player's spellcasters can cast healing as their pre-battle spell.

• Rewards: The victorious warband beats their opponent to their destination, gaining a magical ring to soothe their troubles. Roll once on Table 5-19: Rings in the *Ghostwind Campaign* book.

■ Only the hardiest survive the Wounded Warriors scenario.

In Your D&D Campaign

Even if you don't play CHAINMAIL, you can still use elements of some of the scenarios from this article in your campaign. Below are some suggestions.

Brush War: The PCs enter an area with heavy brush. Perhaps it is the lair of the creature they seek, or maybe a much-needed item is hidden within. Keep in mind that one of the first things an average group of PCs fighting in thick brush is likely to attempt is setting the entire area on fire. If the PCs don't manage it, make sure the NPCs do. Even PCs who have access to *protection from elements,* can be disconcerted by billows of choking smoke and enemies who charge screaming out of fire drifts.

Fear Wood: Try these rules for an adventure in the cursed woods.

• Non-living creatures can only take partial actions while in the cursed woods.

• creatures that are not immune to fear must make a Will save (DC 10 + half the enemy's level) every time they are hit for 20% or more of their total hit points by a single blow or source of damage. A character who fails the Will save becomes panicked and runs away at top speed for one full round. On the fleeing character's next action, and each subsequent action, he can attempt another Will save. Doing so is a full-round action. Succeeding at the Will save ends the panicked condition.

Betrayal: For this scenario, your players' characters are the third party. In this case, the PCs might be approached by an orc waving a tattered white flag. If the PCs choose to listen to his story instead of killing him on sight, they learn that the orc and a handful of his tribesmen have turned on their leader, and they are seeking the help of the PCs after hearing that "worthy adventurers" have been traversing the area. The PCs must decide whether or not to help the orcs. Perhaps they want the reward the rebellious orc is offering, or maybe they just want to take advantage of the situation to rid the area of all orcs and plan on turning on the rebellious orcs after winning the battle.

Wounded Warriors: Just as your players' characters are heading home, convinced they are safe and that they've accomplished their goals, set them up for an ambush. Deliver the attack without telegraphing your intent, but connect it to events earlier in the session. Be sure to adjust the Encounter Level to challenge but not overwhelm the depleted party.

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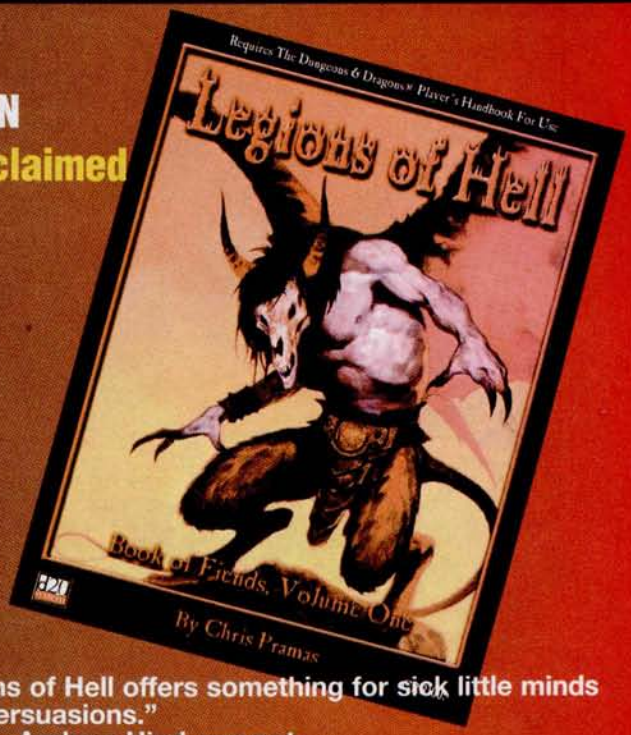

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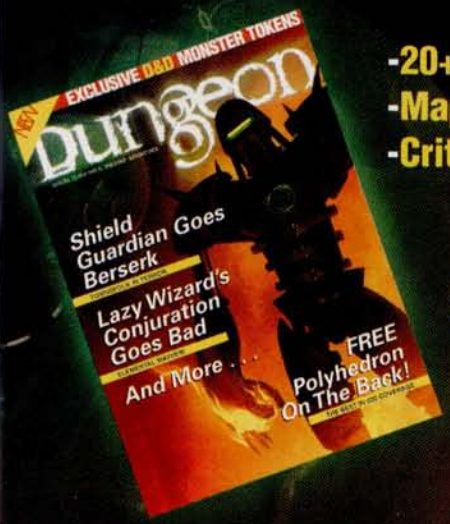
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Nodwick
in:
"EPIC FOR A DAY"
DID THE WORLD SEEM ALL WOBBLY TO YOU JUST NOW?
IT ISN'T MY FAULT THIS TIME; I THREW OUT MY SEISMIC STAFF WEEKS AGO!
IT'S YEAGAR. HE JUST FILLED THE COURTYARD WITH LOTS OF SHINY THINGS.
WHAT'S MORE IMPRESSIVE, IT LOOKS LIKE HE'S CARRYING THEM HIMSELF!
YEAGAR? WHAT'S ALL THIS?
OH, HI, GUYS! I GOT UP EARLY AND THOUGHT I'D GET A HEAD START ON THIS WEEK'S ADVENTURING.
YOU WENT ADVENTURING WITHOUT HELP?
NOT ENTIRELY. I BROUGHT NODWICK ALONG, BUT HE KIND OF--
OH, NO, YOU DIDN'T GET HIM KILLED AGAIN, DID YOU?
NOPE. CROSSFIRE FROM THE SPEARTOOTH ORCISH HORDES AND THE DARKMAGUS CABAL DID THAT.
YOU GOT IN THE MIDDLE OF A FIGHT BETWEEN THE HORDES AND THE CABAL?
NAH, THEY TEAMED UP AGAINST ME. IT WAS RIGHT AFTER I WHUPPED THE DRACONIC OVERLORD, THE ILLITHIDS UNDER HARKMOOR CASTLE, AND THE "LURKERS IN DARKNESS" INFESTING THE SEWERS UNDER THE TOWN.
WHEN DID YOU DO ALL OF THAT?
RIGHT BEFORE BREAK-FAST. IN FACT, I'M LATE FOR MY FIGHT WITH V'REGON THE DESTROYER. I'LL BE RIGHT BACK.
DID I MISS SOMETHING? HE SEEMED PERFECTLY NORMAL YESTERDAY.
ASIDE FROM THAT HELMET.
HE DUG IT OUT OF THE TRASH LAST NIGHT. I THINK HE WAS LOOKING FOR THOSE ELVEN FERTILITY TOTEMS WE THREW OUT...
HE PUT IT ON, JUST TO GET IT OUT OF THE WAY, AND SUDDENLY...
HE COULD DO THE MOST AMAZING THINGS. HE WAS UNSTOPPABLE.
BUT THAT HELMET IS JUNK! WE BOUGHT IT FROM A GNOMISH SOUVENIR HAWKER DURING LAST YEAR'S "BRAMBLAPALOOZA" TOURNAMENT.
MAYBE IT WAS WORTH THE THIRTY GOLD WE PAID FOR IT.
LET'S NOT GO NUTS, THERE, PIFFANY.
WELL, THAT WAS FUN. ON MY WAY BACK, I CHALLENGED A GOD TO A DUEL, AND--
WHAT?
SNATCH!
I GUESS THAT EXPLAINS THINGS...
WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO WITH ALL THIS TREASURE IN THE YARD?
WHO DARES CALL THE GOD NERUMAZON A SISSY-FACE BOOGER?
USING IT AS A BRIBE MIGHT BE WISE...
SMACK!

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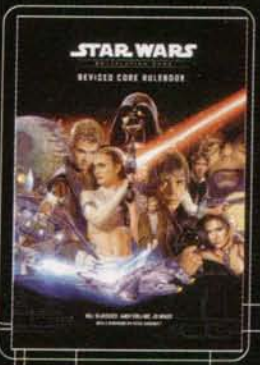

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Silicon Sorcery

ICO:

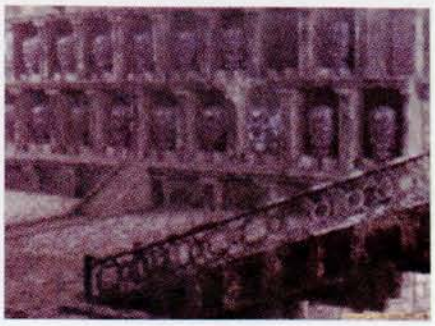
by Will McDermott

Ico is probably the most beautiful and best roleplaying adventure game to come out so far for the Playstation 2 game system. The world that Ico (the main character) travels through is expansive, wondrous, and rendered in exacting and minute detail. But, even with all this scenery constantly being rendered around Ico as you move, it is very easy to traverse—easy, but not simple.

Ico moves much like Lara Croft. He walks, runs, jumps, climbs, and shimmies his way through an evil queen's castle trying to escape after being locked inside a canister due to an ancient curse that manifests once every generation in a young boy born with horns upon his head. Unlocking the mystery of that curse, its link to all the young boys who have been locked in the castle before Ico, and the importance of a young girl named Yorda is ultimately what draws you through this game and keeps you moving Ico through the castle.

But anyone who has ever been frustrated trying to get Lara Croft into just the right position to make the perfect leap will marvel at the ease of moving Ico through the queen's castle. Ico moves seamlessly through the intricately detailed castle, going where you take him quickly and easily even as the camera pans to show you new rooms.

The main problem, as well as another amazing innovation in this game, is Yorda. You must lead her through the castle, for only she can open the idol doors that allow you access to new areas. You can call Yorda to Ico, hold her hand and lead her around, and even help her climb onto ledges. But for all that Yorda can do, she simply cannot get everywhere that you can take Ico. So, you must create alternate routes for her to get her to the idol doors while protecting her from the queen's minions.



And what would an adventure game be without minions to fight? The "spirits," as they're called in the game guide, come in various sizes and shapes, but they all look like walking clouds of smoke with glowing, white eyes. The look of these creatures, along with their theme music, makes your skin crawl and your adrenaline rush every time they appear out of their inky, black portals. When they attack, they snap their smoky tendrils at Ico, sending him sprawling to the floor and then move in on Yorda, grabbing her and pulling her down into the nearest (or often-times the farthest and hardest to find) portal. You must then chase after Yorda and pull her back out before she disappears forever, leaving you stranded in the castle.

These monsters are the most intriguing parts of the game from a roleplaying perspective. Ico is simply a young boy with horns and an amazing will to survive. Yorda is a beautiful

young maiden who needs to be rescued. But the ink-cloud creatures and their mysterious queen are the things upon which great adventures are built.

Nether Creatures

Nether creatures are a special type of undead created by the evil queen of *Ico* to guard her castle and serve her every need. Infused with the essence of air and darkness, these undead appear to be made entirely of an inky, black smoke, resembling the creatures they were in life. A nether creature's limbs trail off into tendrils of smoky nether—the creatures have no hands, feet, or fingers. Therefore, nether creatures cannot use weapons and are slower than they were in life. However, the insubstantial nature of their bodies makes it easier for nether creatures to avoid opponents in melee. The only thing that breaks the shadowy nature of these creatures are their glowing eyes, which pierce the darkness of their queen's castle like beams of light from a lantern.

Creating a Nether Creature

"Nether" is a template that can be added to any living creature (referred to hereafter as the "base creature"). The base creature's type changes to "undead." It uses all the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted below.

Hit Dice: Change to d12.

Speed: Reduce all the base creature's speeds by half. A creature with a fly speed also loses one maneuverability class. For example, a creature that has a speed of 30 feet and a fly speed of 60 feet (poor) would have a speed of 15 feet and fly speed of 30 feet (clumsy) after the nether creature template was applied.

Attacks: A nether creature retains all the natural attacks of the base creature, but a nether creature's hands are turned into tendril-like claws that prevent it from using weapons effectively. If no natural attack is listed for the base creature, it gains two claw attacks at its full attack bonus.

Damage: A nether creature's natural attacks have the same damage value of the base creature. If no natural attack is listed for the base creature, it does damage with its claws following the chart below:

Size	Claw Damage
Fine	—
Diminutive	1
Tiny	1d2
Small	1d3
Medium-size	1d4
Large	1d6
Huge	2d4
Gargantuan	2d6
Colossal	2d8

Face/Reach: A nether creature retains the facing of the base creature, but its reach increases by 5 feet.

Special Attacks: A nether creature retains all the special attacks of the base creature and also gains those listed below.

Improved Grab (Ex): Nether creatures gain the improved grab ability described on page 9 of the *Monster Manual.*

Knock Back (Ex): Whenever a nether creature deals 10 or more points of damage to an opponent in melee (usually with a claw attack), it can then make a trip attempt as a free action against the same target. If successful, the target is thrown back 10 feet and knocked prone, suffering 1d4 points of damage during the tumble. A nether creature using this ability does not incur an attack of opportunity nor does the target of the trip attempt have a chance to trip the nether creature. A nether creature can use this ability only against opponents of the same size category or smaller.

Special Qualities: A nether creature retains all the special qualities of the base creature and gains those listed below and the undead type.

Electricity Vulnerability (Ex): A nether creature takes double damage from electricity attacks unless the attack allows a save, in which case the nether creature takes double damage on a failed save and half damage on a success.

Damage Reduction (Su): A nether creature's shadowy essence is resistant to attacks, giving the creature damage reduction 5/+1.

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Glowing Eyes (Su): At will, as a free action, a nether creature can create *light* as though cast by a 3rd-level sorcerer centered upon itself.

Shadowy Form (Ex): A nether creature's indistinct and shadowy form makes it difficult to determine where its body actually is. Any melee or ranged attack directed at it has a 20% miss chance. *True seeing* has no effect.

Abilities: Increase from the base creature as follows: Str +4, Dex +2. As an undead, a nether creature has no Constitution score.

Skills: Nether creatures gain a +4 racial bonus to Climb, Jump, and Move Silently, and a +8 racial bonus to Hide.

Feats: Nether creatures gain Dodge, Mobility, and Toughness, assuming the base creature does not have these feats and meets the prerequisites.

Climate/Terrain: Same as base creature

Organization: Solitary, pair, gang (2-5), or pack (6-11)

Challenge Rating: Same as the base creature +1

Treasure: None

Alignment: Usually lawful evil

Advancement: Same as the base creature

Sample Nether Creature

Nether Ogre Mage
Large Undead
Hit Dice: 5d12+3 (35 hp)
Initiative: +5 (Dex, Improved Initiative)
Speed: 15 ft., fly 20 ft. (average)
AC: 16 (-1 Size, +1 Dex, +5 natural, +4 chain shirt)
Attacks: 2 claws +9 melee
Damage: Claw 1d6+7
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./15 ft.
Special Attacks: Improved grab, knock back, spell-like abilities
Special Qualities: Electricity vulnerability, damage reduction 5/+1, glowing eyes, shadowy form
Saves: Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +3
Abilities: Str 25, Dex 12, Con —, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 17
Skills: Climb +9, Concentration +3, Hide +5, Jump +9, Listen +5, Move Silently +3, Spellcraft +4, Spot +2
Feats: Dodge, Improved Initiative, Mobility, Toughness

Climate/Terrain: Any land and underground
Organization: Solitary, pair, gang (2-5), or pack (6-11)
Challenge Rating: 9
Treasure: None
Alignment: Usually lawful evil
Advancement: by character class

Combat

A nether ogre mage is a clever and devious opponent, using its spell-like abilities to great advantage before entering melee combat. In melee they attempt to knock opponents into dangerous areas and use their improved grab ability to grapple foes. Once an opponent is grabbed, the nether ogre mage flies up to drop the foe from a height.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, the nether ogre mage must hit with its claw attack.

Knock Back (Ex): Whenever a nether ogre mage deals 10 or more points of damage to an opponent in melee, it can then make a trip attempt as a free action against the same target. If successful, the target is thrown back 10 feet and knocked prone, suffering 1d4 points of damage during the tumble. A nether ogre mage using this ability does not incur an attack of opportunity, nor does the target of the trip attempt have a chance to trip the nether ogre mage. A nether ogre mage can use this ability only against opponents of Large size or smaller.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will—*darkness* and *invisibility*; 1/day—*charm person, cone of cold, gaseous form, polymorph self,* and *sleep.* These abilities are as the spells cast by a 9th-level sorcerer (save DC 13 + spell level).

Electricity Vulnerability (Ex): A nether ogre mage takes double damage from electricity attacks unless the attack allows a save, in which case the nether ogre mage takes double damage on a failed save and half damage on a success.

Flight (Su): A nether ogre mage can cease or resume flight as a free action. While in gaseous form it can fly at normal speed and has perfect maneuverability.

Glowing Eyes (Su): At will, as a free action, a nether ogre mage can create *light* as though cast by a 3rd-level sorcerer centered upon itself.

Shadowy Form (Ex): A nether ogre mage's indistinct and shadowy form makes it difficult to determine where its body actually is. Any melee or ranged attack directed at it has a 20% miss chance. *True seeing* has no effect.

Undead: Immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, and disease. Not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage.

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Sage Advice

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This month, the Sage contemplates mysteries arising from the recently released *Masters of the Wild* supplement for the D&D game.

When an oozemaster character uses his malleability power, can the oozemaster bring his equipment with him?

Yes. Malleability is similar to the druid's *wildshape* power or the *polymorph self* spell when it comes to equipment. Anything the oozemaster holds, carries, or wears is subsumed into the ooze form (and becomes nonfunctional).

What is an oozemaster's speed when using the malleability power? How long does it take to squeeze through an inch-wide crack? What actions can you take when using this power? Are your senses affected?

You move at your normal speed when using the malleability power. Cracks at least 1 inch wide do not block your movement, you slip through them as easily as a human walks down a corridor 10 feet wide.

The malleability power does not affect your senses.

When using the malleability power, you cannot speak and cannot wield tools, weapons, or manipulate small objects such as spell components, nor can you wear anything. The limitations rule out many actions, such as fighting with a weapon, casting a spell with a verbal or material component, and the like. The character can use most move actions, and might very well find clever ways to take other actions. For example, the correct feats might allow you to cast some spells. Also, the character can attempt to bull rush or trip foes.

Does an oozemaster provoke an attack of opportunity while going into or out of the malleable state?

No. Malleability is a supernatural ability (see the malleability description on page 68 of *Masters of the Wild*). Using a supernatural ability does not provoke attacks of opportunity (see Table 8–1 in the *Player's Handbook*).

Is it possible to share the malleability power with a familiar, special mount, or animal companion?

If the familiar, special mount, or animal companion has the share spells ability, you can share spells, spell-like abilities, or supernatural abilities with them, provided the effect you share has you as a target. Malleability has you as a target. Note that a familiar, special mount, or animal companion must stay within 5 feet of you at all times to share the effect. See Chapter 1 of *Tome and Blood* for a discussion of the share spells ability.

In *Masters of the Wild*, the animal lord's animal bond ability says the ability functions as the druid's *animal friendship* spell, except that the companions must be from their selected group and the maximum Hit Dice of companions (whether or not she adventures) equals twice her animal lord level. The tamer of beasts animal mastery ability says the tamer can have animal companions whose Hit Dice total no more than the sum of twice his tamer of beasts level plus twice his caster level for *animal friendship.* It says the Hit Dice are twice the level, but it does not say "whether or not she adventures." For the tamer of beasts, are the Hit Dice of companions restricted to half the normal total for an adventuring character, or is that restriction lifted as with animal lords?

The restriction is not lifted for tamers of beasts who are adventurers.

If you have levels in both druid and in the tamer of beasts prestige class, do the animal companions you get from being a druid gain the special abilities from the tamer of beasts prestige class? Also, how many animal companions can a druid 10/tamer of beasts 5 have? Can they be beasts? What if the tamer of beasts has a familiar or special mount?

The number of animal or beast companions a tamer of beasts character can have is a function of both the character's tamer of beasts level and the character's *animal friendship* caster level. So, the character's druid (or ranger) levels have a direct effect on how many companions the character can have; the maximum total Hit Dice of the character's animal companions is twice her tamer of beasts level plus twice her *animal friendship* caster level. Anything that increases the character's *animal friendship* caster level also increases the total number of Hit Dice worth of companions the character can have. This can include the spellcasting improvements the tamer of beasts receives at 3rd, 6th, and 9th level. If the class that received the

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improvement also allows casting *animal friendship,* then use the increased caster level to determine the number of animals or beasts the character can befriend.

The example character can befriend a maximum of 30 HD worth of animals and beasts.

Any animal or beast companion a tamer of beasts has receives companion benefits from the tamer of beasts class, no matter how the tamer of beasts got the companion. Note that a tamer of beasts cannot have an animal or beast companion with more Hit Dice than the tamer of beasts has. The example character could not have a single companion with more than 15 Hit Dice. If a character already has a companion with 16 or more Hit Dice when entering the tamer of beasts class, the creature must be dismissed. Familiars and special mounts are not "companions" and do not count toward the character's total Hit Dice limit for animal companions or the Hit Dice limit for any single companion. They do not receive any companion benefits from the tamer of beasts class.

Does a shifter who is also a druid get any additional animal companions as she gains shifter levels?

The shifter has no spellcasting ability, thus its spells don't get any better with shifter levels. A druid who adds shifter levels doesn't get any more animal companions.

Does a shifter's character type ever change at any time before the character reaches 10th level in the shifter class? If so, do I gain the abilities that go with the types I assume? For example, if I have the power to assume undead forms, does my type change to undead if I change into a ghoul? If so, do I then become subject to undead turning or to damage from healing spells? If I can turn into plants and I turn into a shambling mound, do I become immune to critical hits? Can I assume the abilities of a racial subtype?

The shifter's *greater wildshape* ability does not change your type. The shifter gains the natural and extraordinary powers of the assumed form, but not powers that stem from the form's type. A shifter in an undead form is not an undead creature and cannot be turned or harmed by healing spells. A shifter in plant form is still subject to critical hits. The *greater wildshape* power also does not allow you to gain abilities associated with a subtype.

What abilities do you gain through the shifter's *greater wildshape* power? For example do you gain the average ability scores of the assumed form, or do you just apply the racial modifiers of the new form to your own statistics?

Just as with the *wildshape* power or the *polymorph self* spell, you keep your mental ability scores (Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma), and you gain the average physical scores (Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution) of the shape you assume. Racial adjustments become irrelevant (yours no longer apply, and the shape's average scores already include any racial adjustments for the shape).

As noted in the previous question, you gain the assumed form's extraordinary and natural abilities. Extraordinary abilities are noted as such in the *Monster Manual* entry for the form. Natural abilities are those that are not marked with another designator (typical natural abilities include a creature's various modes of movement, method of respiration, and assorted abilities that are too trivial to appear in the creature description). You do not gain any spell-like or supernatural abilities of the assumed form. Also, as noted in the previous answer, you do not gain any abilities (good or bad) from the assumed form's type.

Can you ever mimic a specific person with the shifter's *greater wildshape* ability, or do you always look like the same creature when you assume a specific form? For example, say you assume the form of an elf. Are you identifiable as yourself? Do you look like some random elf (and do you always look like that elf when in elf form)? Or can you control your appearance?

As with the *polymorph self* spell and the *wildshape* ability, minor aspects of your appearance are under your control, and you can even attempt to disguise yourself as a particular creature.

Both the *wildshape* and *greater wildshape* powers require you to be familiar with the form you assume. Just how familiar is "familiar" for the purposes of shifting? Would fighting a creature qualify? Would just seeing it once work, or does familiarity require active study?

Any encounter in which you fight or have a similar complex interaction with the creature would qualify, as would studying the creature for a day.

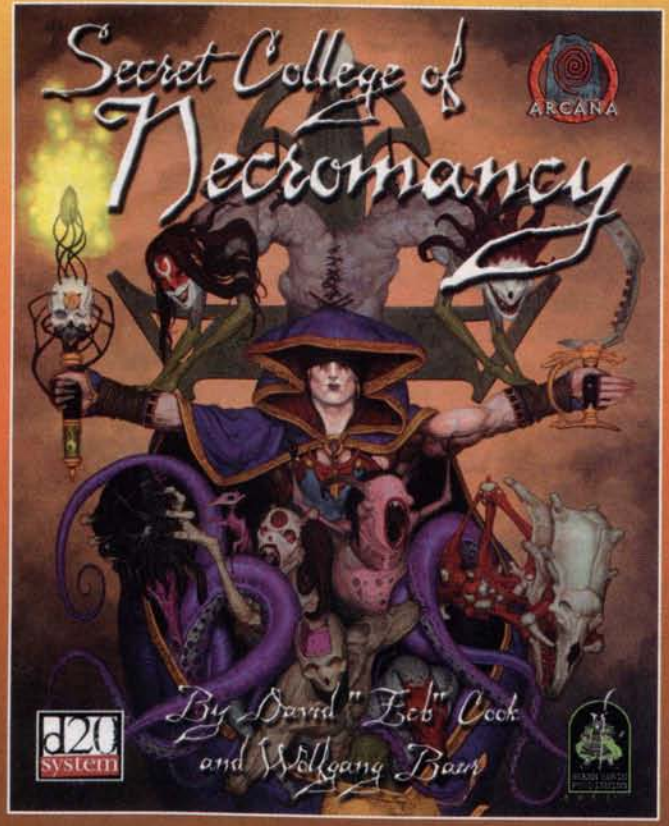
A 1st- or 2nd-level shifter only has the ability to turn into humanoid and monstrous humanoid forms. If I took the form of an orc, do I gain an orc's standard equipment, or am I naked?

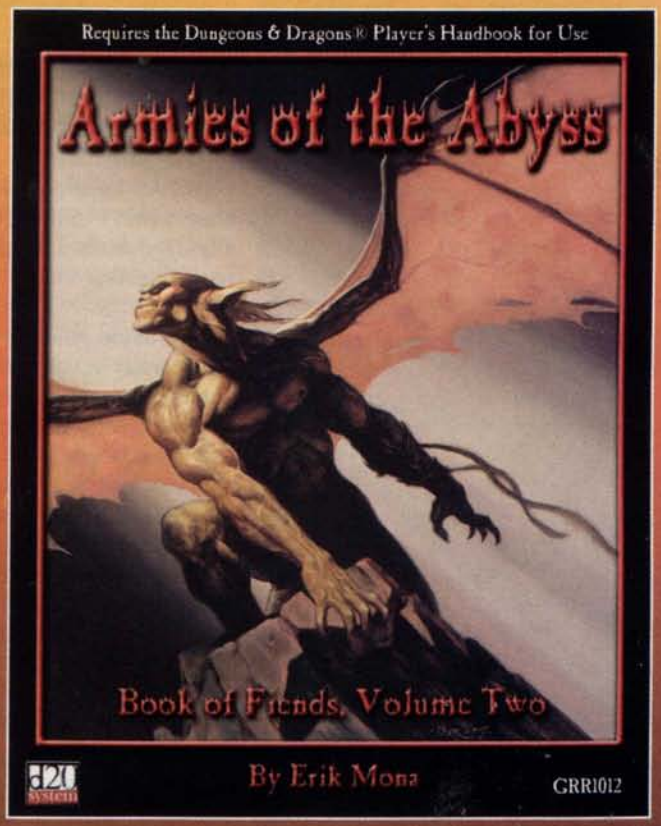
As with the *polymorph self* spell, your equipment morphs to resemble a typical orc's equipment; this is true whenever you assume an equipment-using form (see the *polymorph self* spell description for a list of equipment-using forms). Note that equipment altered this way remains functional. It is not melded into your new form and rendered nonfunctional.

Note that shifters have the *greater wildshape* ability, which allows them to choose which bits of their equipment morph along with their forms and which meld into their assumed forms. So, you can assume the form of an orc in his birthday suit if you like. If you do, all your equipment is melded into the orc form and becomes nonfunctional. You also can opt to have some or all of your equipment resemble an orc's equipment (in which case it remains functional), or you can have some or all of your equipment not change with your orc form at all, which probably means you wind up looking like a very wealthy orc.

The description for the shifter's *greater wildshape* power says

YOU SUPPLY THE HEROES, WE SUPPLY THE EVIL!

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equipment separated from the character reverts to its normal form, but what about body parts? Is there a point where poisons can be emulated (as per the shapechange spell)? If separated body parts don't change, how long do they stay changed?

When a character uses *wildshape* or *greater wildshape*, portions of his body that become separated from the character retain their current forms—they do not revert as equipment does. (Note that this is not the case with *polymorph* spells, but it is the case with *shapechange*.) This allows the *wildshaped* or *shapechanged* character to use extraordinary abilities such as poison if the assumed form has them.

A separated body part retains its assumed form at least as long as the character retains that form, but it radiates Transmutation magic. *Dispel magic* or an *antimagic field* can force the part back into its normal form. (Use the shifter or druid's class level to determine how strong the part's magical aura is or how difficult the effect is to dispel; use the normal rules for detecting or dispelling spell effects if a *shapechange* spell was involved). If the separated body part has become part of another creature (for example, another creature has eaten the part or the part was injected into another creature) the part melds into the creature's form and the transmutation effect ends without any additional harm to the creature.

Separated body parts change along with the character if they remain within 5 feet of the character. If separated by more than 5 feet, they retain their forms indefinitely (though the effect can be ended as noted above). Note that a character using *wild shape* or *greater wild shape* returns to his own form if killed.

The chart showing the benefits of the Faster Healing feat on page 23 of *Masters of the Wild* seems to indicate that you are penalized for taking this feat when healing ability score points with long term care and a successful Heal check (3 points per day versus 4 points per day). Is that right?

The last number in the 1st column (with Faster Healing) should be a 3. The last number in the 2nd column (Complete Bed Rest) should be a 5.

If you use an infusion to hold a spell with a long casting time, will the infusion take an equally long time to take effect?

No. An infusion takes effect immediately when imbibed (which requires a standard action), regardless of the spell's casting time.

The infusion rules include a variant that allows you to save some money if you grow or collect your own herbs. Exactly how much money can you save?

If you use your own herbs in an infusion, you save the entire monetary cost of the infusion (25 gp per spell level times the caster level of the spell), see page 31 of *Masters of the Wild*. You still have to pay the infusion's XP cost.

How does the cumulative penalty to Strength from the *languor* spell work, exactly? I'm having a hard time understanding the wording in the spell description.

Each round the spell lasts, roll 1d6-1 for every 2 levels the caster has. For example, if the caster is 10th level, roll 5d6 and subtract 1 from each die. Total the result and apply that penalty to the subject's Strength score (the total for any single round cannot be less than 0 or more than 10 no matter how many dice you roll). Every round the spell lasts, roll again and add the penalty to any penalty the subject already has from the spell.

The spell summary on page 81 of *Masters of the Wild* says the *thunderswarm* spell deals 16d8 damage, but in the actual text for the spell it says the damage is 16d6 if you're in the path of the spheres. It also says that you can create 4 large spheres that each deal 4d8 points of damage. That totals 16d8. Each small sphere deals 2d6 points of damage for a total of 16d6. What damage does *thunderswarm* deal?

Thunderswarm deals 16d6 points of damage: 4d6 for each large sphere, 2d6 for each small sphere, and 16d6 if you're caught in the spheres' path.

The ability bonuses granted by the forsaker prestige class are listed as inherent bonuses. The *Dungeon Master's Guide* says that an inherent bonus has a limit of +5 to any single ability score. However this is talking about magic items, so we were wondering whether the forsaker ability bonus stacks with other inherent bonuses and if it is limited to +5 for any one ability.

The forsaker's ability bonuses are indeed inherent bonuses just as the class description says, and they follow all the rules for inherent bonuses listed in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*; that is, they do not stack with other inherent bonuses, and they are limited to +5 for any single ability score.

The description of the foe hunter prestige class's rancor ability seems to imply that it only works with melee weapons, not projectile weapons. Usually, damage bonuses for projectile weapons explicitly list a range limit of 30 feet. However, there is nothing in the description of the ability that specifically limits it to melee weapons, nor is there any range limit specified.

Rancor applies to any attack the foe hunter makes, provided the attack requires an attack roll and inflicts damage. There is no range limit.

Both the forsaker and the foe hunter prestige classes have stackable spell resistance. Does this stack with spell resistance from a magic item? What about racial spell resistance? Suppose I have a drow, ranger 7/foe hunter4. Is his SR equal to 41 (22 racial + 19 foe hunter; assuming that the +1/level racial bonus also stacks with the +1/level foe hunter bonus)? What happens if I add magic armor that grants SR 11? Is my SR now 52?

A foe hunter or forsaker's SR stacks with SR from most other sources; however, don't count a character level twice when calculating the

character's total SR, and don't stack two SRs with each other, only with the prestige class bonus. If you have two or more SRs that don't stack, use the best combination.

The sample character has:

Foe hunter SR 19 (base 15+4 for foe hunter levels)

Armor SR 11

Drow SR 22 (base 11+11 class levels)

Add the armor to the foe hunter (SR 30).

Do not add the drow SR because it already takes level into account, and in any case, you wouldn't stack armor SR and drow SR because those two SRs don't stack. Note that in this case, the SR of 30 applies only against effects that come from a hated enemy. Magic from other sources has to overcome the character's drow SR of 22.

The geomancer prestige class has a power called spell versatility, which allows you to mix and match the qualities of arcane and divine magic to get the greatest possible advantage. If I have a character that has an Intelligence of 18, a Wisdom of 12, 5 levels in wizard, 3 levels in cleric, and 4 levels in geomancer (with 3 levels adding to cleric and one to wizard), could I substitute my Intelligence for my Wisdom when determining whether I can cast a certain divine spell? The wisdom score of 12 would only let me cast 2nd-level divine spells, but substituting the Intelligence score of 18 would allow me to cast up to 8th-level divine spells. Is this possible? Since clerics don't use spellbooks, can I prepare any wizard spell without a spellbook? What if I have sorcerer levels and my Wisdom score is higher than my Charisma? Can I use Wisdom to determine what sorcerer spells I can cast?

Spell versatility applies when casting spells, not when preparing them or when accessing daily spell slots for classes that do not prepare spells. The example character could ignore arcane spell failure chances for armor thanks to her cleric levels, even when casting wizard spells. Likewise, the example character can use her Intelligence of 18 to set the saving throw DC for any spell she casts, even a cleric spell.

When preparing cleric spells, the example character is limited to cantrips, 1st-level spells, and 2nd-level spells, thanks to her Wisdom of 12. The character can fill her higher-level cleric spell slots with lower-level spells, just as any spellcaster can.

A geomancer/wizard still needs her spellbooks to prepare wizard spells, no matter what other classes she has. A geomancer/cleric still needs daily prayer to prepare cleric spells.

A geomancer/sorcerer is still limited by Charisma when determining what spells can go into her sorcerer spell slots. A geomancer/wizard/sorcerer with an Intelligence score of 18 and a Charisma score of 11 can only cast cantrips and 1st-levels spells as a sorcerer. As noted earlier, the character can fill her higher-level sorcerer spell slots with lower-level spells. D

POWER PLAY

Take it Lightly

by Stephen Schubert

A multiclassed ranger/fighter looking to get the Weapon Focus and Weapon Specialization feats should take the feats in a light weapon such as handaxe or short sword. The bonuses from the feats would apply to both attacks with the weapon when fighting with two weapons, and the off-hand weapon is light, avoiding most of the penalties of two-weapon fighting. Or the character could specialize in a light throwing weapon, such as dagger, throwing axe, or light hammer, and get the bonuses on two-weapon ranged attacks as well as melee.

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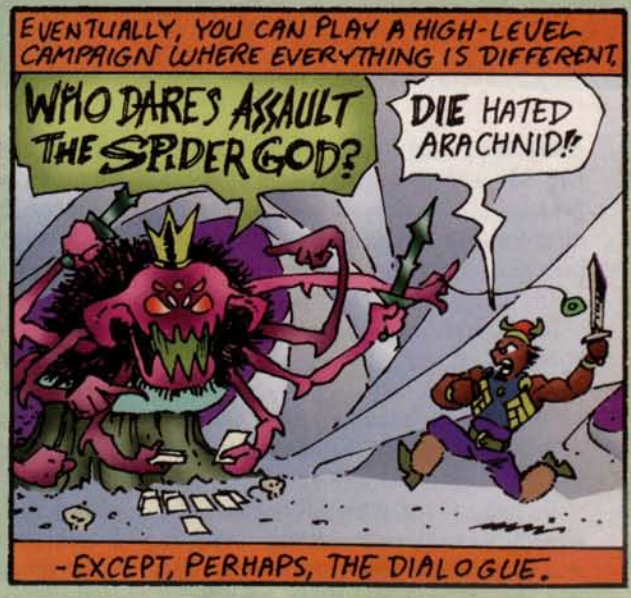
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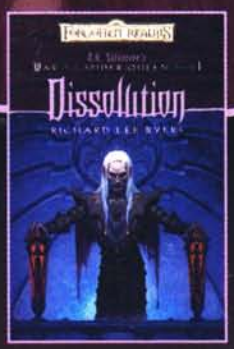

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